AMERICAN WHALERS
in the
WESTERN ARCTIC

American Whalers in the Western Arctic

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in the
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THE FINAL EPOCH OF THE GREAT AMERICAN SAILING WHALING FLEET

A Portfolio of
Watercolors & Drawings
by
WILLIAM GILKERSON

Introduced and
Related in text
by
JOHN R. BOCKSTOCE

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Gilkerson on War. New York: McGraw Hill, 1964.
The Scrimshander. San Francisco: Troubador Press, 1975; Revised edition, 1978.
Marine Arts by Wm. Gilkerson. Salem, Mass.: Peabody Museum of Salem, 1981.
Arctic Whaling Sketchbook. Fairhaven, Mass.: Edward J. Lefkowicz, Inc., 1983.
The Adventurous Voyage. (In preparation.)

Other books and monographs by John R. Bockstoce:

Eskimos of Northwest Alaska in the Early Nineteenth Century. University of Oxford, Pitt-Rivers Museum, Monograph Series No. 1. Oxford: University of Oxford, 1977.
Steam Whaling in the Western Arctic. New Bedford: Old Dartmouth Historical Society, 1977.
The Archaeology of Cape Nome, Alaska. University of Pennsylvania Museum Monograph No. 38. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1979.
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Foreword

MORE THAN TEN YEARS AGO, when I first saw Bill Gilkerson's work, I realized that the artist had to be a sailor. Not only were his scenes sensitively and vividly portrayed, but his ships were ready to put to sea: his masts were properly stayed, his yards could be trimmed, and his sails could take the pressure of wind.

Later, after we met, I learned that it was his fascination with the physical machinery of ships that gave his work such honesty and strength. And, unlike most of the artists who portray great ships at sea, Bill has never lost sight of the fact that it was men who sailed those ships. He understands that men can at once be grand and petty and that their day-to-day behavior shares equal importance with the awesome moments that make those voyages fascinating to us.

Twenty years ago, when I began work in the north, I could not have guessed that my interest in the Arctic would compel me to spend nearly three months of every summer north of the Arctic Circle. I embarked on my study of the history of whaling in the western Arctic through an odd concatenation of events.

My doctoral work on the history of prehistoric whaling cultures in the Bering Strait region led me to the study of contemporary Eskimo whaling techniques, and—most important—to become a member of an Eskimo whaling crew. Each spring for more than a decade I spent six weeks on the ice of the Arctic Ocean in this exhausting, exciting endeavor.

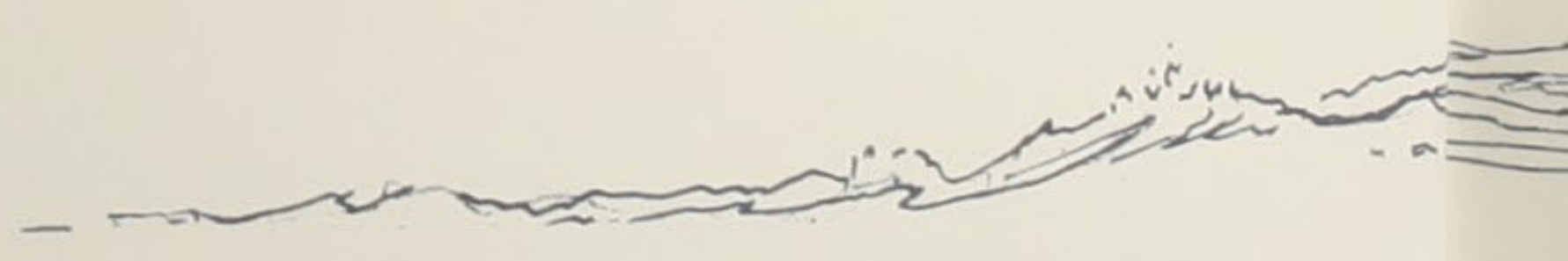
At Point Hope I was at once struck by the fact that the Eskimos had amalgamated their traditional craft and procedures with historical Yankee tools and methods. Why had such a fusion come about? Why were these people combining things a millennium old with things a century old? The answers were not clear, and I soon discovered that little or nothing had been written on this subject, nor on the seventy-year period during which the whaling fleets criss-crossed the western Arctic's waters and irrevocably changed its history.

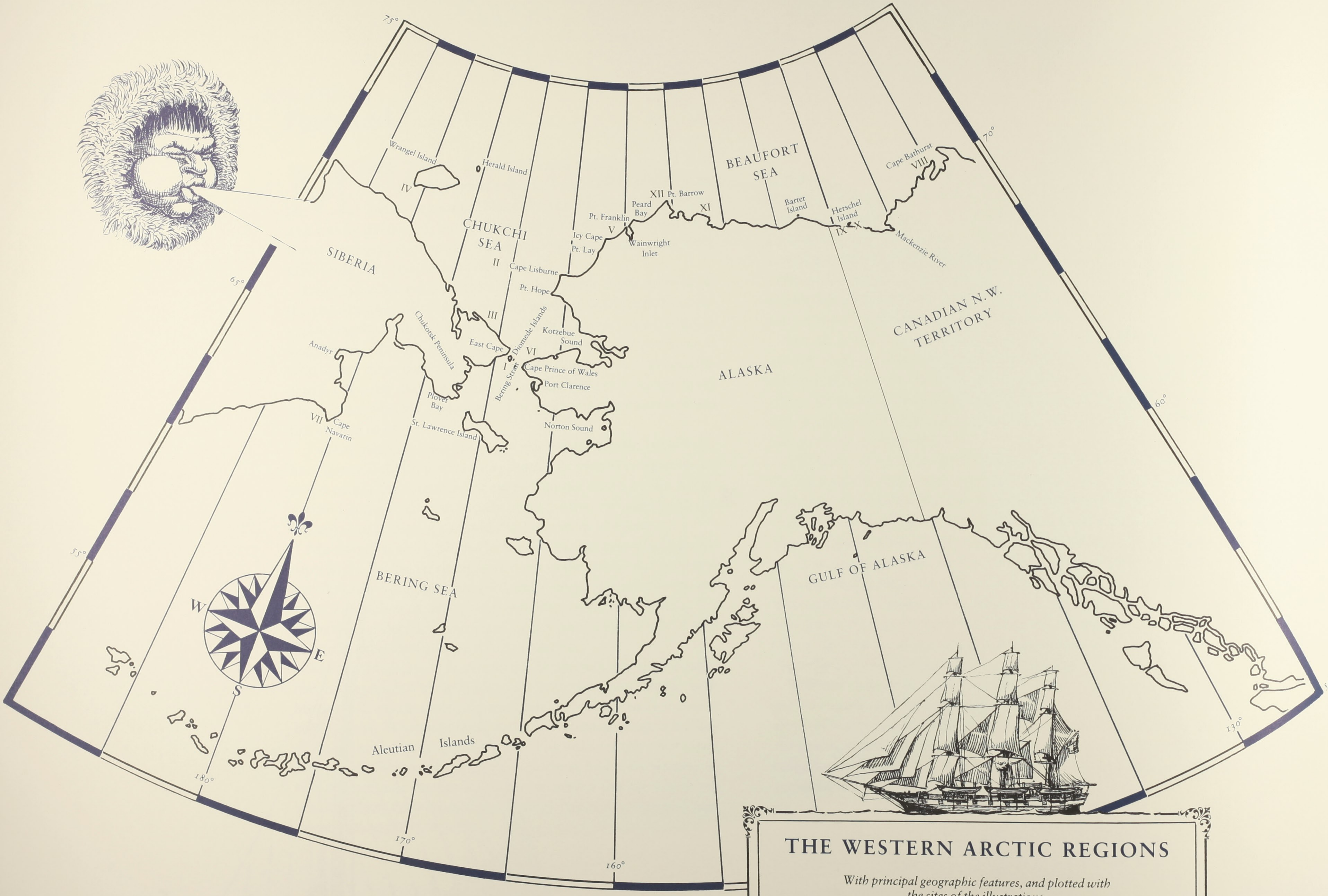
More than ten years ago I began research on this unilluminated and, to me, fascinating story, and it was at the New Bedford Whaling Museum that I began to understand its dimensions and complexity. Here, amid the world's greatest collections of manuscripts, printed documents, fine arts, and whalecraft relating to the American whaling industry, I was able to study the subject thoroughly. Under the generous and rigorous tutelage of Richard Kugler, Director, and Philip Purrington, Senior Curator, my understanding was refined and enlarged.

My historical research at the museum added value to my annual visits to the western Arctic for field work. I quickly realized that an actual survey of the western Arctic coast for the physical remains of the whaling industry was desperately necessary because of the dangers of coastal erosion and the rising tempo of oil exploration.

The western Arctic coast is remote, shallow, and tortuous. In the interests of safety and simplicity I drew on my experiences with the Eskimo whaling crew. I rebuilt the wreck of a thirty-two foot Eskimo umiak, a flexible shallow draft vessel that is shaped something like a New England dory. I covered it, as the Eskimos do, in walrus skin, and in 1972 I set out on a voyage that—with comings and goings—would take up nine summers, cover six thousand miles, and result, I believe, in the first traverse of the Northwest Passage by open boat. The trip allowed the identification of gravesites, shipwrecks, and shore structures of the whaling industry from Bering Strait to Dolphin and Union Strait.

William Gilkerson and I have thus drawn on a total of forty years of study of ships and the Arctic. We have long regarded the story of western Arctic whaling as one of the most exciting in American maritime history, and it has been a rare pleasure to collaborate to produce a book which is at once historically accurate and vividly illustrated.





THE WESTERN ARCTIC REGIONS

With principal geographic features, and plotted with the sites of the illustrations.

I The bark *Superior* enters Bering Strait. II Bark *California* and boats—lancing a spent Bowhead. III Bark *Jireh Swift* pursued by the Confederate Ship *Shenandoah*. IV Wrangel Island discovered by the bark *Nile*. V Barks *Eugenia* and *Julian* abandoned in the Disaster of 1871. VI Bark *Helen Mar* clearing Prince of Wales Shoal. VII Jim Vincent's boat lost in the ice. VIII Steam barkentine *Newport* among whales. IX Steam whalers wintering at Herschel Island. X Fourth of July celebrated at Herschel Island. XI The survivors of *Navarch* in Brower's party rescued. XII Whaler *Young Phoenix* a derelict.

Introduction

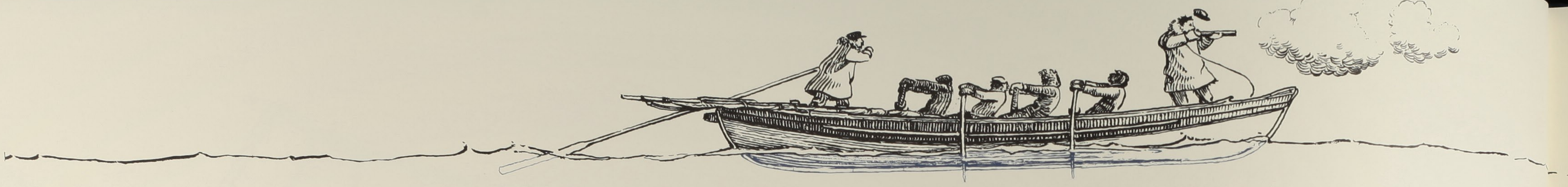
ONE OF THE MOST important chapters in the history of the Pacific Ocean began in July 1848 when the American whaling bark *Superior* dropped anchor in Bering Strait. Never before had an American whaleship ventured so far north in the Pacific. The crew, realizing that Captain Thomas Roys had taken them into icy, dangerous waters more than a thousand miles from the nearest whaleship, began to panic. But as the chilling fog surrounding the ship began to lift, vast numbers of bowhead whales were revealed. Roys immediately ordered the crew to lower their boats, and they found the bowheads so numerous and oil-rich that they filled the ship in a month and departed for Hawaii with 1600 barrels of oil in the hold.

Roys's discovery of the Arctic whaling grounds marked the high point of the American whale fishery. It was the last important whaling discovery of the nineteenth century, and the richness of those waters sustained the industry for another sixty years. Coming as it did, when all but the most remote waters of the world had been searched for whale stocks, the discovery brought Americans into close association with the western Arctic —an association that has remained unbroken through various commercial ventures and continues to the present day.

News of Roys's daring and successful voyage touched off an oil rush to Bering Strait. In 1849 more than seventy ships sailed there, and the number continued to grow annually, spurred by reports of large catches, until in 1852 more than two hundred vessels were operating in those waters. But the 1852 season was poor, and 1853 and 1854 were disastrous. Whalemen, assuming those waters to have been fished out, virtually deserted them in 1855, 1856, and 1857, turning their attention to the bowheads of the Okhotsk Sea. Soon, however, the catches in the Okhotsk declined, and in 1858 the ships began to return to Bering Strait and found plenty of whales.

From then until the industry's collapse half a century later, the majority of the North Pacific fleet went annually to Bering Strait and quickly developed a pattern of cruising that varied only slightly in the succeeding years. Leaving the ports of New England in the autumn, the ships rounded Cape Horn in the southern summer and then cruised in the temperate waters of the Pacific, usually for sperm or gray whales, until March, when most of the fleet stopped in Hawaii to recruit for the Arctic cruise. After a few weeks in Hawaii, they sailed north and after a month's sail reached the melting pack ice in the central Bering Sea. From then on the men maintained a constant watch for bowheads as the ships wormed their way through the narrow leads in the ice fields along the Siberian shore. They reached Bering Strait in June. By then the bowheads had far outdistanced the ships and were safely amid the dense ice of the Arctic Ocean, where the ships would not be able to penetrate for more than a month. To pass the time until late July, when the retreating ice would allow the ships to reach Point Barrow to meet the whales again, the whalemen traded with the natives or, in the 1860s and 1870s when oil prices were still relatively high, took large numbers of walruses.

When the ice had receded far enough to let the ships along the Alaskan shore beyond Icy Cape, they began to intersect the paths of the whales that were now on their return migration from the Beaufort Sea and were heading toward their autumn feeding grounds near Herald Island in the Chukchi Sea. By late August most of the fleet had followed the whales there, where the ships frequently made their best catches in the deepening cold of the autumn. But although these waters could be lucrative, they could also be treacherous, for in late September the pack ice begins its creep south, its two great icy arms girdling the Chukchi Sea, reaching south along the Alaskan and Siberian shores and surrounding the relatively open area near Herald Island. The whalemen were alert to this danger and often calculated the last day that it would be possible to make a run for Bering Strait, slipping between the two converging bodies of ice.



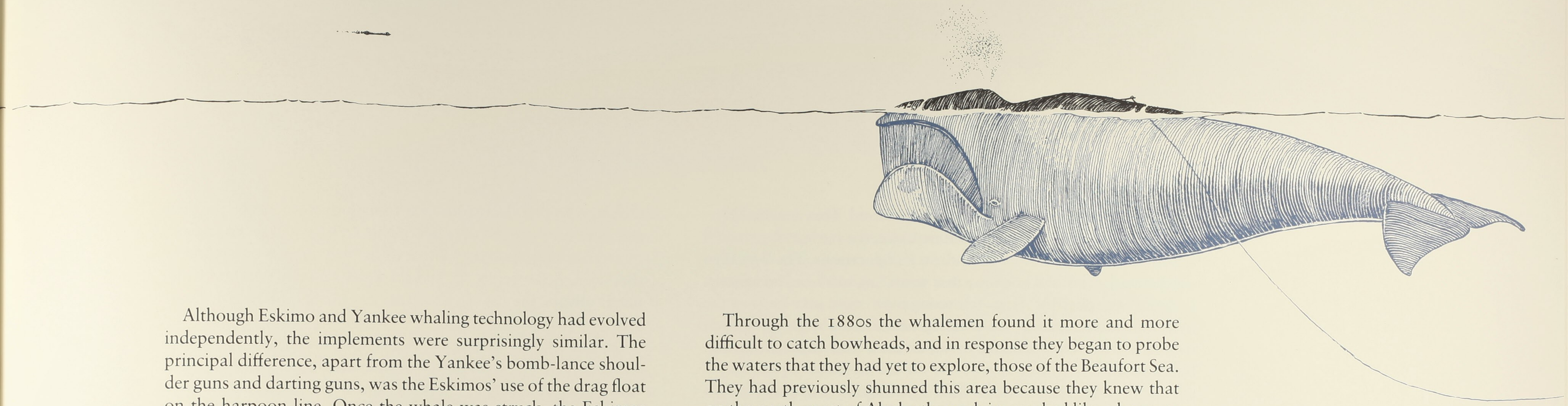
In 1865 began a series of tragedies that were to plague the Arctic fleet for the next forty years. In that year the last encounter of the Civil War took place at Bering Strait when the Confederate raider *Shenandoah* burned twenty whaleships; in 1871 thirty-two ships were abandoned between Point Belcher and Icy Cape when the ice trapped them on a lee shore; in 1876 twelve more ships were lost near Point Barrow; and in almost every year one or two vessels were wrecked or crushed by the ice.

In addition to these terrible losses of ships and men came a slow decline in the price of whale oil, the result of the nascent petroleum industry progressively undercutting the whale oil market. To offset this decline the whalemen redoubled their efforts to increase their catches. The bowheads had already been harvested so severely that the whalemen had difficulty finding significant numbers before the "fall season" of hunting in the waters between Point Barrow and Herald Island; consequently, they turned to the vast herds of walruses that were accessible near Bering Strait in the "middle season," late June and July. Using skiffs to approach the walruses sleeping on the drifting floes, they would open fire with large-caliber rifles, then chop out the ivory and strip the carcass of blubber. The blubber from an average-sized walrus yielded only about two-thirds of a barrel of oil, which could be sold at about the same price as whale oil. The walrus harvest was enormous: between 1868, when the hunt began in earnest, and 1880, when the population had been nearly eliminated, more than 200,000 were killed.

Despite walrus hunting, by 1875 the outlook for the industry was gloomy. The price of animal oils continued to fall, and the market showed little chance of reviving. What temporarily saved the industry and gave it another thirty years of life was the market for baleen, commonly called whalebone. Beginning in the late 1870s the fashion industry began to require larger and larger amounts of baleen, the long plates that hang from a bowhead's upper jaw and are used by the whale to filter plankton from the water. This flexible and resilient material, used for corset stays and skirt hoops, was the only commodity available in the nineteenth century that approximates many of the qualities of modern plastics.

AS THE PRICE OF BALEEN began to rise, enterprising whaling merchants in New Bedford and San Francisco saw the advantages of using steam auxiliary whaling ships to pursue the increasingly elusive bowheads among the ice floes where no sailing vessel could go without great risk. The steamers were an immediate success, and the practice was widely imitated in the 1880s, as the price of baleen rose ever higher and the number of bowheads declined further.

The rise of whalebone's price and the depletion of the bowheads stimulated the creation of commercial shore whaling stations. In 1884 the Pacific Steam Whaling Company of San Francisco, acting on the advice of Edward Perry Herendeen, decided to establish a shore whaling station at Point Barrow, Alaska, using the station that a U.S. Army Signal Service expedition had recently abandoned. Herendeen had been the expedition's interpreter from 1881 to 1883 and had closely observed the Eskimos' shore whaling methods. When he returned to San Francisco, he convinced Josiah Knowles, the company's manager, that many whales that were out of reach of the ships could be taken in the narrow leads in the ice as they migrated north in the spring.



Although Eskimo and Yankee whaling technology had evolved independently, the implements were surprisingly similar. The principal difference, apart from the Yankee's bomb-lance shoulder guns and darting guns, was the Eskimos' use of the drag float on the harpoon line. Once the whale was struck, the Eskimos threw the line and float overboard, thus avoiding the Yankees' "Nantucket sleigh ride," in which the boat itself was towed by the whale—with potentially disastrous consequences in ice-choked seas.

Herendeen returned to Point Barrow in 1884 to establish the station. Although the 1885 season was unsuccessful, the men took several whales the following spring, and the success of the venture was assured. When the news of the success of this new whaling technique reached San Francisco in the autumn of 1886, it prompted the S. H. Frank Company to attempt a similar operation at northern Alaska's other great whaling site: Point Hope. Thus began projects that would continue vigorously until 1910 and would, as much as the whaleships, contribute to the virtual extirpation of the bowhead whale.

Because the price of baleen stayed high, the stations were immediately profitable. Within a few years fifteen were established between Point Barrow and the Point Hope region. The stations usually operated with a skeleton staff and counted on putting out several crews—occasionally as many as twenty—manned largely by Eskimos. Because about eight men were needed for each crew, the competition for manpower was intense. Each station offered its men a retainer fee consisting of as much as a year's supply of flour, as well as rifles, cartridges, and other food and manufactured goods—all in payment for a two-month whaling season.

Through the 1880s the whalemen found it more and more difficult to catch bowheads, and in response they began to probe the waters that they had yet to explore, those of the Beaufort Sea. They had previously shunned this area because they knew that on the north coast of Alaska the pack ice worked like a hammer on an anvil. But the lure of profits emboldened them, and in 1888 the ships travelled to Barter Island, about three hundred miles east of Point Barrow. They were the first foreign vessels to reach those waters since the searches for Sir John Franklin's lost exploring expedition more than thirty years before.

Strangely enough, it was not the whaling fleet but an itinerant whaleman who discovered the bowheads' summer feeding grounds. In 1887 Charles Brower, the manager of a shore whaling station at Point Barrow, heard from Eskimo traders returning from the Mackenzie River delta that they had seen large numbers of whales in its shallow waters. The following summer Brower outfitted one of his men, Joe Tuckfield, with a whaleboat, an Eskimo crew, and provisions, and sent him east on a reconnaissance. Tuckfield wintered in the delta, found game and driftwood abundant, had good relations with the natives, and—most important—found the bowheads plentiful. He took one whale and had the baleen to prove it when he returned to Point Barrow in 1889.

His report that whales were "as thick as bees" in those waters set off a baleen rush that ushered in the Arctic whaling industry's last hurrah and pushed the whales—already severely reduced—toward extinction.

Before he reached Point Barrow, however, Tuckfield met a small fleet of steamers off the Colville River and gave them his news. The ships immediately set off for the east, and entered waters where whaleships had never ventured. They reached Herschel Island and examined Pauline Cove, the harbor that would soon become the hub of the industry's operations. The fleet then retreated westward knowing that wintering safely in the western Arctic was possible. Ships wintering over could save most of the short summer season for whaling rather than waste time each year on the unproductive voyages back and forth from San Francisco.

In 1890 the Pacific Steam Whaling Company sent north its two smallest steamers, the *Mary D. Hume*, which is still afloat today, and the *Grampus*, to experiment in wintering and whaling from the advance base at Herschel Island. They were joined there by the little schooner *Nicoline*, owned by other interests; the three became the first whaleships to winter east of Point Barrow.

Although the *Nicoline*, short of provisions, left for San Francisco as soon as the ice would allow in 1891, followed soon after by the *Grampus*, the *Mary D. Hume* remained for another winter and found her "El Dorado," as her first mate, Hartson Bodfish, put it. The *Hume* went east to Cape Bathurst, where the muddy waters of the Mackenzie become clearer, depositing enough silt to allow sunlight to penetrate and trigger a rich plankton bloom. There the *Hume* found the bowheads' summer feeding grounds—their last refuge and the last important whaling ground to be discovered by the American whaling industry.

When the *Hume* reached San Francisco in October 1892, she had made one of the most productive whaling voyages in American history. Her cargo grossed $400,000. Her success touched off a frenzy of activity that would produce more than one hundred wintering voyages to the Beaufort Sea in the next twenty years. The whaling fleet quickly moved to these distant waters, and those ships that arrived in the first years were immediately rewarded with good catches. But the bowhead population had been so thoroughly depleted that after 1896 there were few successful seasons.

The 1897 season signalled the beginning of the end for the industry. In that disastrous year four ships were lost to the pack ice, and four others were forced to seek refuge in emergency quarters along the coast. Three of the lost ships were steamers; they were never replaced, and the Pacific Steam Whaling Company, always the industry's leader in foresight, began to wind down its Arctic operations.

Ironically it was the very scarcity of the bowheads that helped to save them. As fewer and fewer were caught, the price of baleen rose higher, reaching $7.00 per pound at one point. But the high price invited cheaper substitutes, and spring steel and "featherbone," an amalgam of goose quills, were soon introduced for corset stays. Then in 1907 a Parisian couturier decided to "banish the waist" in his forthcoming collection of *haute couture*. The price of baleen dropped drastically, and in 1908 it was difficult to sell at all. From 1908 onward the few ships that cleared port for the Arctic as whalers were in fact primarily outfitted for fur trading voyages.

Thus Thomas Roys's voyage of 1848 was not only the most important whaling discovery of the nineteenth century, it was also one of the most important events in the history of the Pacific Ocean. For sixty years the richness of the western Arctic's whale stocks lured whaleships. More than 2700 cruises were made in those waters at the cost of the loss of more than 150 whaleships, the lives of many men, and the near extinction of the bowhead whales. The vast American presence in the Bering Sea added impetus to the sale of Alaska, and the support facilities generated by the whaling industry in Hawaii contributed to the American commercial presence in those islands that ultimately led to their annexation. The natives on both sides of Bering Strait, as well as in northern Alaska and western Arctic Canada, were supplied with manufactured goods, and their lifeways changed—for better and worse. Lastly, the first search for oil in the western Arctic touched off the second, for it was a whaleman who discovered the oil seeps in the Sagavanirktok River delta that led to the Prudhoe Bay oil strike.

I The First Whaleship through Bering Strait

ON JULY 23, 1848, Captain Thomas Roys stood on the deck of the whaling bark *Superior* with a revolver in his hand. His small ship was becalmed in Bering Strait, the shallow fifty-mile-wide gut that separates the Pacific's waters from the Arctic Ocean. The strong current was carrying his ship north at three or four knots. Ahead loomed menacingly the Diomede Islands, two black, flat-topped pillars of rock that spring vertically from the sea and rise more than a thousand feet. Twenty-five miles to either side, the massive headlands of East Cape, Siberia, and Cape Prince of Wales, Alaska, framed his view of the Arctic Ocean. He was searching for whales in waters where only a handful of ships had ever been.

But Roys's gaze was directed much closer to his vessel, for seven umiaks, walrus skin canoes, carrying more than 250 Eskimos were heading toward the *Superior* from the American shore. Poised as he was at the threshold of the unknown, at the gates of the Arctic, a thousand miles beyond the nearest whaleship, he was naturally anxious about the natives who, for all he knew, were hostile and who certainly outnumbered his crew by at least eight to one. To make matters worse, the *Superior* was entirely devoid of arms, excepting the "one Blunt & Sims revolver that would not go unless you threw it."

Fortunately a southeasterly breeze sprang up, allowing Roys to push the bark beyond their reach, but this was by no means the end of his troubles. He had concealed the *Superior*'s course from the crew. Having discovered the truth about their location only three days before, they were consumed by fright. The first mate was driven to tears; the crew was close to mutiny over the prospect of probing further into distant and hostile seas, and obeyed orders reluctantly.

They were soon enveloped by one of the chilling and depressing fogs that haunt Bering Strait in the summer. When the fog lifted a day later, Roys knew that he had made the greatest whaling discovery of the century. Whales appeared on all sides of the ship in vast numbers. His officers pronounced them to be humpbacks—fast swimmers that were both hard to catch and known to sink once killed.

Roys knew better. Three years earlier, while he was in command of the bark *Josephine* of Sag Harbor, Long Island, a fighting right whale had struck him with its flukes and broken two of his ribs. Roys was forced to take the *Josephine* to the town of Petropavlovsk on the Kamchatka Peninsula so that he could recuperate ashore while the ship continued its cruise under the first mate. During his convalescence he met a Russian naval officer, who had been north of Bering Strait and who mentioned the herds of strange whales in those waters. Roys began to suspect that these whales were the same as the "Greenland" whales that Europeans had been capturing for more than two centuries in the high latitudes beyond the North Atlantic.

As he sailed the *Josephine* toward her home port of Sag Harbor, he had the opportunity to reflect upon what he had learned, and after his arrival home in May 1847, he began to consult the published works of the explorers who had sailed north of Bering Strait. Roys found reports of whales in the narratives of both Captain James Cook and Frederick Beechey, Royal Navy.

Roys had grown up in the whaling industry and did not deceive himself with the idea that a ship's owner would allow him to sail to Bering Strait to test his hypothesis. Although phenomenally lucrative whale stocks might lie beyond the known whaling grounds, it was extremely unlikely that the owners would risk their capital on a radical departure into dangerous seas while there were plenty of whales to be taken on Kamchatka and in the Gulf of Alaska.

On Roys's next voyage the Grinnell Minturn Company assigned him the bark *Superior*. At 275 tons she was small for her rig, and the company outfitted her for a short and inexpensive voyage, planned to last less than a year, to Desolation (Kerguelen) Island, southeast of the Cape of Good Hope.

Roys put to sea in July 1847 and headed directly to the Crozet and Desolation Islands at the edge of the Antarctic. He was unlucky there; in the rugged weather of the Roaring Forties he took only three whales. Roys continued east, reaching Hobart, Tasmania, in March 1848 with a cargo of only 123 barrels of oil. He then set out on a short, equally unsuccessful cruise to the South Pacific and returned to Hobart to refit for the next leg of his voyage. With so little success to show for his efforts and with his crew already grumbling, he decided to play his wild card. He wrote to the owners from Hobart, informing them of his intention to go to Bering Strait, knowing that by the time they received his letter he would be in the Arctic Ocean.

On July 25, when Roys ordered his boats lowered in Bering Strait, his crew, "who never expected to see home again," manned their boats and set off after the whale that some probably now realized was not a humpback but a species they had never seen before. Roys later reported his men "were not inclined to meddle with the 'new fangled monster' as they called him." They must have proceeded as tentatively as possible toward the huge, black, shiny mass. Believing it to be the Greenland whale (hence relatively docile and easily killed), Roys drove his boat toward the creature through the twilight of midnight, and his boatsteerer, the harpooner, fastened the whaling iron without difficulty. Roys wrote,

> *The whale went down and ran along the bottom for a full 50 minutes and I began to think that I was fast to something that breathed water instead of air and might remain down a week if he liked. He then came up and was immediately killed. My officers now declared it was a humpback sure. We took the whale alongside, the weather thick and calm and only 25 fathoms of water. I told my mate to let go and anchor to keep from being drifted about in the current and not know[ing] where I was he looked at me with astonishment that I would think of anchoring in the open. . . .*

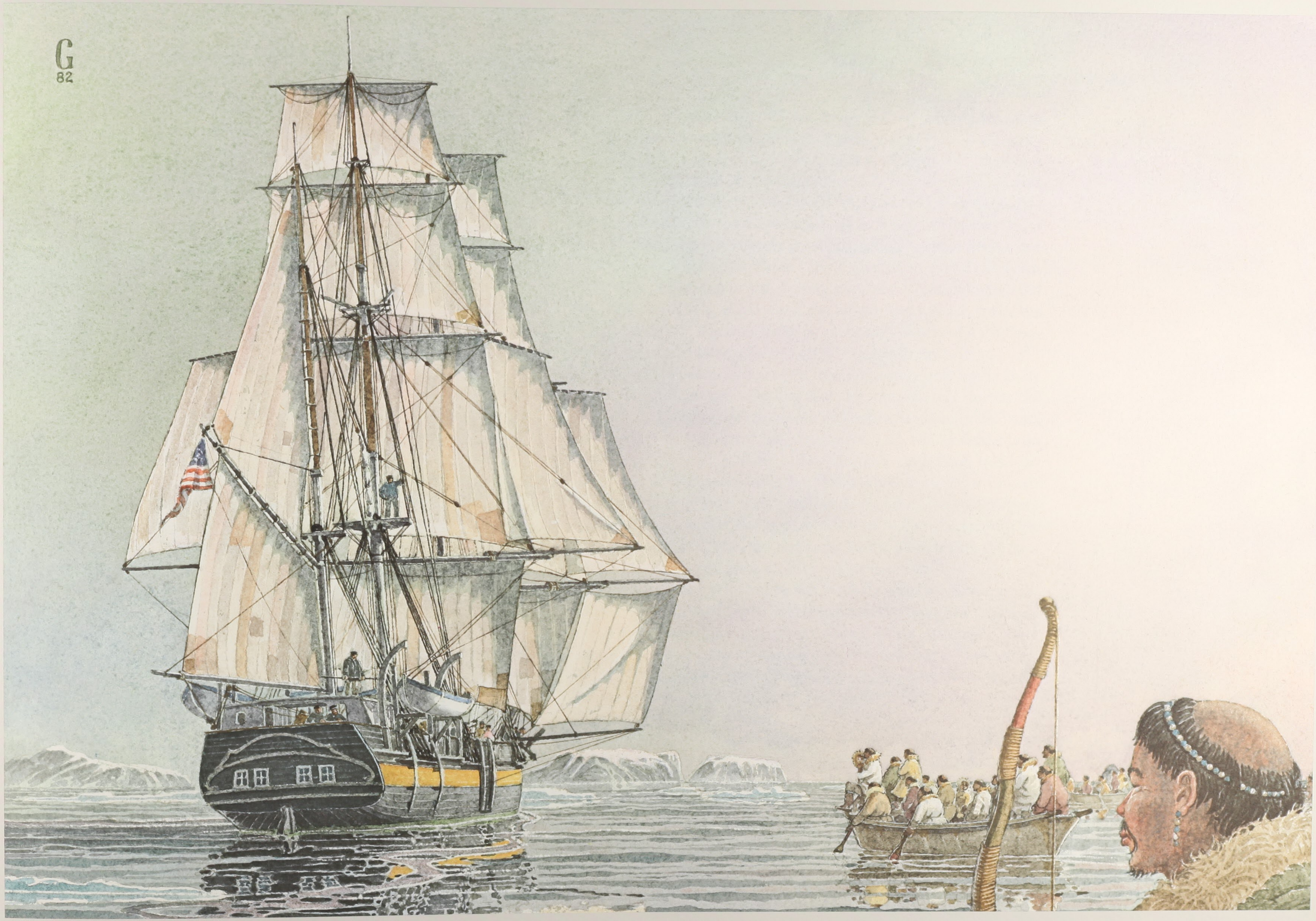
Once the anchor bit, the bark swung around and surged on its cable in the three-knot current. As the fog lifted, they found themselves only three miles beyond Big Diomede Island in the middle of the strait. They were the first commercial hunters to take a whale north of the Aleutians. When they began to cut in their whale they found to their surprise that its baleen—the long keratinous plates that hang from the whale's upper jaw and allow it to filter its food (tiny shrimp and other plankton) from the water—was twelve feet long, far longer than most right whales' baleen. To their equal astonishment, when they tried out the blubber, rendering it into oil, they found it yielded 120 barrels, a vast amount compared to that of most other whales.

Despite the continuing apprenhension of his officers and men, Roys drove the ship another 250 miles north before turning back. He took whales all the way. His tryworks never cooled, so fast did he catch whales. Nevertheless, his "officers and crew were living in hourly expectation of some unforseen calamity and almost beside themselves with fear."

"I actually believe," Roys added, "if they had any hope that open mutiny would have succeeded they would have tried it to get away from this sea."

North of Bering Strait he caught eleven whales that yielded 1600 barrels of oil, thus filling his ship so that he could take no more. He passed south through the strait on August 27, and, no doubt to the relief of his men, he headed straight for Hawaii, arriving at Honolulu October 3.

The *Superior*'s voyage set off a flurry of excitement, and what news that was not spread by word of mouth was quickly broadcast by the Reverend Samuel Damon in *The Friend*, his Honolulu missionary newspaper (a mixture of temperance advocacy and marine intelligence) that was carried round the world by mariners. By early 1849 most of the marine journals of the world had published the story.



The bark Superior enters Bering Strait, July 23, 1848

WILLIAM GILKERSON

II Pursuit and Capture of the Bowhead

IT TAKES SPECIALIZED SKILL to capture a bowhead. Silence is important. A bowhead's hearing is acute, and the dull rattle of oars in the muffled oarlocks is usually enough to "gally" the whale and drive it under. Sailing is the best way to approach the animal, but if there is no wind, paddles must be used. Without the noise of waves on the water, most bowheads hear the boats well before they come within striking range. Similarly, the foreign sounds of a turning propeller or of a boat striking even a small piece of ice is enough to drive them off. A bowhead swimming fast can easily outrun a whaleboat in light airs, and no boat can catch a whale going to windward, even in a blow. Under such conditions, the whalemen were frequently frustrated.

Even in good conditions, the results could be unsatisfactory if a number of competing whaleships was present. Among the many boats in the chase after a few whales, one boat could, in one careless way or another, gally the whales.

It was customary among whalemen that if a lone whale was sighted, the first ship's boats to lower would get to chase. But this custom was impossible to adjudicate or enforce, and the poorer the luck, the more it was ignored. Likewise, when one ship's boats were lowered, another captain would often lower his, whether or not he could see whales. In such cases, the first captain would often send one or two of his boats off in another direction to draw off the interlopers.

When a boat did strike, the bowhead apparently uttered a cry, inaudible to whalemen, that gallied all the whales for miles around. Once the whales had been gallied, they remained for a time very "shy" and extremely wary of approaching boats.

When a whaleboat successfully neared a bowhead, the boatsteerer, as the harpooner was called, rose, jammed his thigh into the clumsy cleat for balance, and raised the first harpoon. The officer steering the boat tried to stay in the whale's blind spot, approaching the whale from either directly behind or straight ahead. He tried to "go on" the whale just as it blew, when its acute hearing was temporarily reduced.

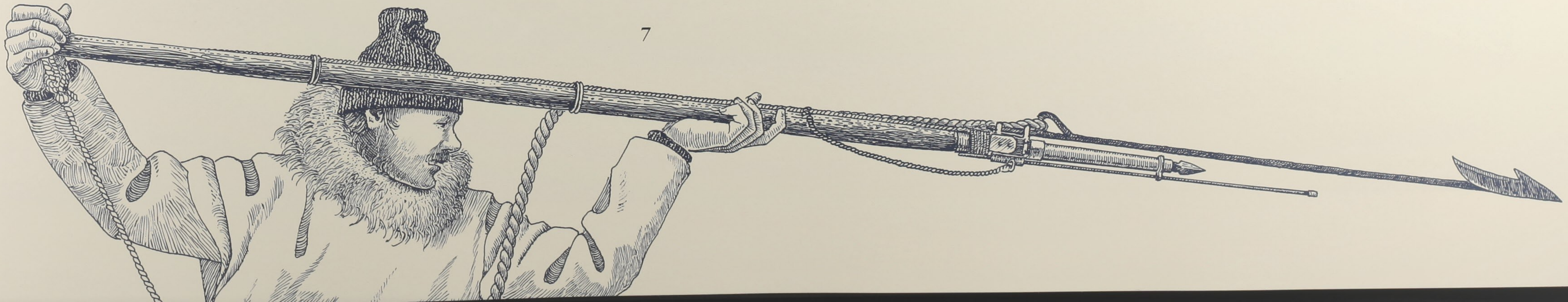
The whale's most vulnerable spot was its neck, ten to twelve feet behind the nose of a mature animal. Before the development of the darting gun (a smooth bore device attached to the iron that fired a small bomb at the moment of striking), it did not much matter where the boatsteerer struck the whale—apart from a few spots where there was so little flesh that the iron would not hold. But with the advent of the darting gun, and hence the potential for an immediately killing shot, the boatsteerer tried to strike the animal between the two shiny black humps that projected from the water and thus to sever its spinal cord with the bomb.

A boatsteerer could throw his iron accurately only up to thirty feet. As soon as one iron was fast, he immediately darted the second, or jettisoned it to prevent its slashing around in the boat. As quickly as he could, he then picked up the shoulder gun (which resembled a very heavy shotgun and fired a bomb through the air), and tried to bomb the whale before it sounded.

When darting guns were employed, only the first had an iron. As soon as it was fast, the boatsteerer tried to dart the second. He had to be careful, however, not to strike the place where the iron was fast, or the explosion might cause it to draw.

It was possible but rare to kill a whale with the irons alone. Even with the use of the shoulder gun and darting guns together, only about one whale in twenty was killed instantly. Some whales required a dozen bombs or more to kill them. There were, consequently, many ways to lose a whale after it had been struck: the whalemen, to their disgust, lost between fifteen and twenty-five per cent of their whales.

A wounded bowhead could turn ugly and try to demolish the boat with its tail, but bowheads most often ran or sounded. If the whale sounded fast, it might take all the boat's whaleline before the men could "bend on" to another boat's line. Even if successful in this, the whale could easily take six hundred fathoms or



more. The whale could stay below for as long as an hour and simply outwait the men. If the whale reached the bottom, it could also "roll the irons out," as the tortuous shapes of many recovered toggle irons attest. If the whale ran on the surface, it could tow the boat three miles or more in making for the safety of the ice. If it reached the ice before the men could get close enough to kill it, and if the whaleline did not part, the men would be forced to cut loose from the whale to avoid having their boat dashed to pieces on the ice.

The men lost whales through human or mechanical mishaps as well. When darting, the boatsteerer occasionally missed the whale entirely, or he might pitch his irons in too flat an arc so that they bounced off the whale's back or darted into its head, where the iron would not toggle; or might dart only one iron, or dart too lightly so that the whale was "hay hooked" and the iron easily drew free. If the boatsteerer missed a good chance he rarely got another. The captain usually "broke him" immediately, sent him forward to the forecastle, and "fleeted up" the "preventer boatsteerer" or another likely crewman.

Skill was also needed to kill a "fast" whale. Bowheads often dive deep first, then, after waiting, rise and run near the surface toward safety. If the whale sounded, the ship's boats tried to gather around the spot where they judged it would rise to bomb or lance it as it surfaced. If the whale ran, then the men in the "fast boat" had to endure a "Nantucket sleigh ride," the boat streaking through the water behind the whale, hobby-horsing over the swells and smashing into seas, while sheets of spray soaked them.

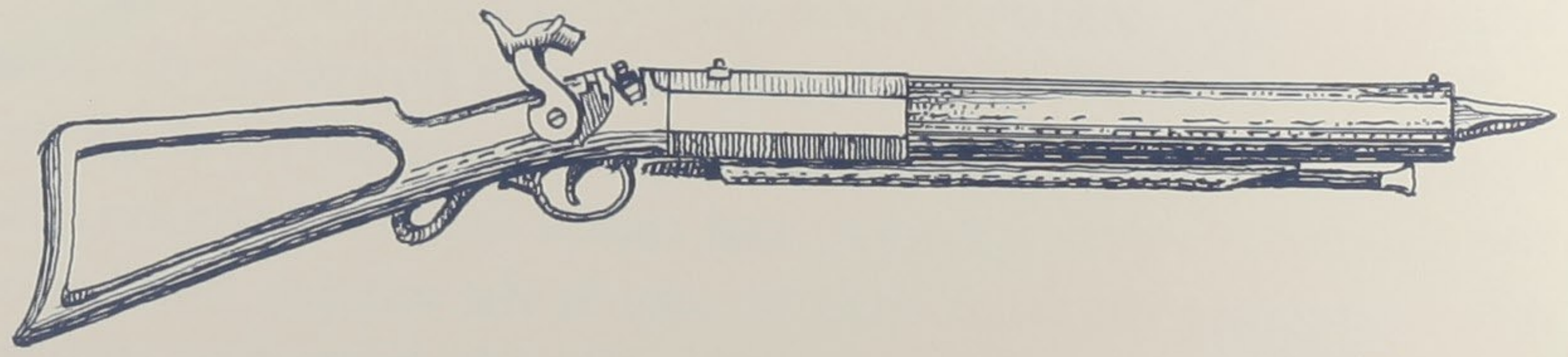
While the men in the boat tried to pull themselves close enough to bomb or lance the whale, the other boats, if they happened to be in the right position, tried to get a killing shot at the edge of the ice when the whale rose to blow just before diving under the ice.

Before shoulder guns gained universal acceptance, the men would "spade flukes," that is, cut the tendons in the whale's small with the whaleboat's sharp cutting spade, a dangerous practice, hamstringing the whale and thus preventing it from diving.

If the whale tired before reaching safety, the men pulled the boat hand over hand up the whaleline toward the animal while the boatsteerer and officer changed places, the officer going to the bow for the kill. When the whale was tired and wounded, "spouting thin blood," often the officer would try to kill it with the first lance. The men began by "bowing on" the whale, bringing the boat up very close to the whale, and cleating the whaleline to the gunwale, "wood to blackskin," the officer thrusting or pitching the lance into the whale, hauling it out by its warp and repeating the action. He was aiming "just aft the fore shoulder," trying for the whale's "life," the heart and lungs.

When the whale began to "spout thick blood," the dark globs of congealed blood that signalled it was mortally wounded, the men quickly backed the boat away, lest the whale lash out in its death flurry and stove the boat. When the whale "finned out," rolled on its side with its fin weakly moving in the air, its life was fast ebbing. The men waited until it ceased moving, then approached cautiously, and the officer poked its eye with the lance to make sure that it was dead, not merely comatose.

When the whale died, and if there were other whales nearby to chase, the men stopped merely to mark the carcass with a "waif," a small flag mounted on a pointed shaft, so that the animal could be seen from the ship. They were then free to set off again in pursuit of the other whales.



C. C. Brand bomb lance

III The Hunters Hunted

AT BERING STRAIT on June 28, 1865, under the bight of East Cape, Siberia, in mirror calm and quiet, nine whaleships stood at anchor around another that lay listing severely. Aboard the ships, the crews were carrying out ship's chores and keeping a lookout for passing bowheads and drifting floes that might menace the vessels. More than a dozen whaleboats were moored to the listing whaler, the ship *Brunswick* of New Bedford. Aboard her the captains of the nine were auctioning her gear and cargo.

Only the day before, in a strong breeze, the *Brunswick* had smashed into a large cake of ice and stove a hole in her hull below the waterline. By heeling the ship over, Captain Alden Potter kept the gash clear of the water, but there was no hope of repairing her where she was, more than a thousand miles from even the most rudimentary shipyard. Following the customary procedure, Captain Potter flew his colors upside down, signalling that his ship was in mortal jeopardy. When the other ships closed in to offer assistance, Potter called their masters aboard, and they confirmed his opinion, unanimously agreeing that there was nothing that could be done to save the vessel. Consequently, Potter began his auction to raise what money he could for the ship's owners and insurers before abandoning her.

It was just after midday, two heads of baleen having been put aboard the *James Maury* and the auction proceeding for the remaining baleen and oil as well as the rigging, whalecraft, boats, and other gear, when to the surprise of all, a steamer hove into sight from the south. The masters questioned its appearance in a place where no auxiliary vessel had ever been.

Seeing it flying the American flag, some thought it was a supply vessel for the Western Union Telegraph Expedition, which was attempting to lay a cable across Bering Strait to link Paris and New York. A few thought it might be the Confederate raider that had been in Australia in February, but they were quickly overruled: by the dates the ships had left San Francisco and Honolulu, some as late as April 22, it was well known that the Civil War was all but over, that the Confederate Armies were disintegrating, and that all armed resistance would soon cease.

But, to the surprise of the whalemen, five armed boats put off from the steamer, and uniformed officers of the Confederate Navy announced to the crews of the becalmed ships that they were the prizes of C.S.S. *Shenandoah*. The men were ordered to abandon their vessels and come aboard the *Shenandoah* as prisoners or be blown out of the water.

Pandemonium ensued. The captains raced to their ships; some slipped their cables and tried to reach within one marine league of the Siberian shore, where, theoretically, they would be under the protection of the Russian government. But it was no use. In the calm the ships could move nowhere, and soon the crews began abandoning them and rowing to the steamer while prize crews boarded the vessels, axed open oil casks, and set fire to them.

Two ships were released to take the prisoners south, but eight were burned in what was the last offensive action of the American Civil War. The incident occurred two and a half months after the surrender of Confederate forces at Appomattox and one and a half months after the capture of Jefferson Davis.

The *Shenandoah* was the last of the commerce raiders that the Confederacy put to sea. She was sent out in a desperate attempt to destroy the American Arctic whaling fleet and thus cause the whaling merchants to put pressure on the Northern government to end the war.

The *Shenandoah* slipped out of England in October 1864, rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and crossed the Indian Ocean to Australia, burning Northern ships as she went. After a refit in Melbourne, she headed into the Pacific and burned four whaleships in the Caroline Islands before heading into the Sea of Okhotsk. There, she took only one prize, Captain Ebenezer Nye's *Abigail* of New Bedford, but one of the *Abigail*'s mates joined the *Shenandoah*'s crew and guided her to the whaling fleet in the Bering Sea.

On June 21, 1865, the *Shenandoah* reached Cape Navarin. Almost immediately the men began seeing scraps of blubber and meat floating in the water, indicating that a whaleship was cutting in nearby. Judging from the direction the current was setting, Captain James I. Waddell correctly concluded that the whaleship was southwest of him. He steered in that direction, and in the northern twilight shortly after midnight, he saw a smudge on the horizon, the smoke from a whaler's tryworks. At 9:00 A.M. the men spotted two ships to port; at 10:00 they could smell the smoke from their fires; at 11:00 Waddell sent a boarding party to the largest vessel in the fleet, the ship *William Thompson* of New Bedford, and an hour later he seized the *Euphrates*, also of New Bedford.

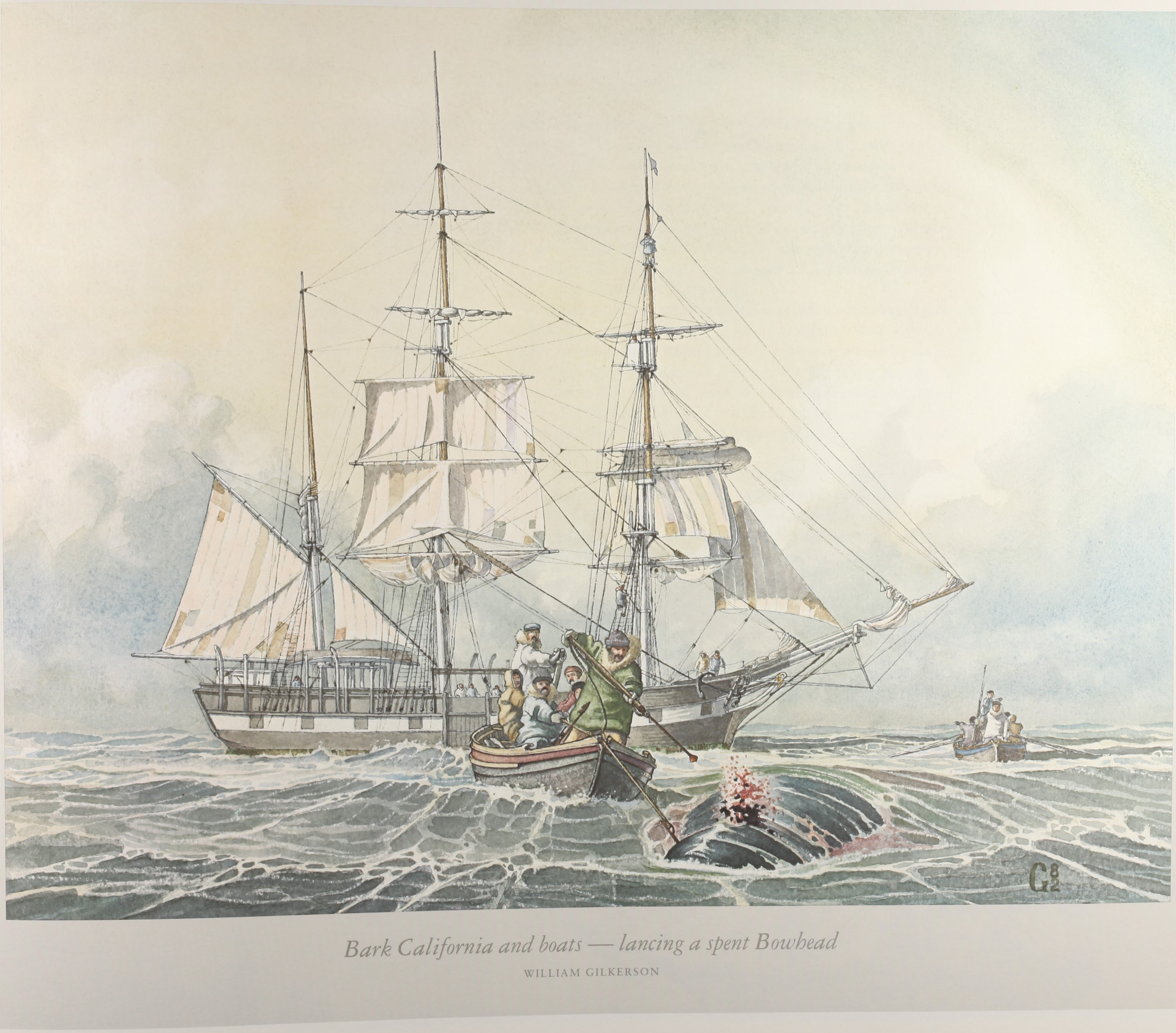
As soon as they had the *Euphrates*, the lookouts reported another sail and Waddell went after her. It was the bark *Robert Towns* of Sydney, Australia, and it proved to be an unfortunate encounter for the *Shenandoah*. As the raider passed close to the *Robert Towns*, her captain, Frederick A. Barker, a Nantucketer, asked the ship's name. Waddell, who had run up the Russian flag, replied it was the ship *Petropavlovski*. Barker smelled a rat. He had been in Australia when the *Shenandoah* was there, and he no doubt had a description of her. As the ships parted, Barker set out at once to warn the fleet farther to the north, while Waddell, unable to detain a neutral vessel, returned to his two prizes. After taking the crews aboard the *Shenandoah*, he set fire to the vessels, then "steamed away to the northward in search of more Yankees."

Almost at once the raider was enclosed in fog, and it was not until late the next day that she emerged from it to find eight sails in sight. Again, unfortunately for Waddell, two of the ships were flying foreign colors.

The first vessel they overhauled was the ship *Milo* of New Bedford. As the *Shenandoah* approached, the officers on board the *Milo* assumed she was one of the Western Union Telegraph Expedition ships. The *Shenandoah* passed close under her stern, and Waddell asked Captain Jonathan C. Hawes to come aboard with his ship's papers. Captain Hawes, "a fine looking old veteran, standing over six feet two, and straight as an arrow," came over the rail and announced that he believed the war was over. Waddell asked for proof, but Hawes could produce none.

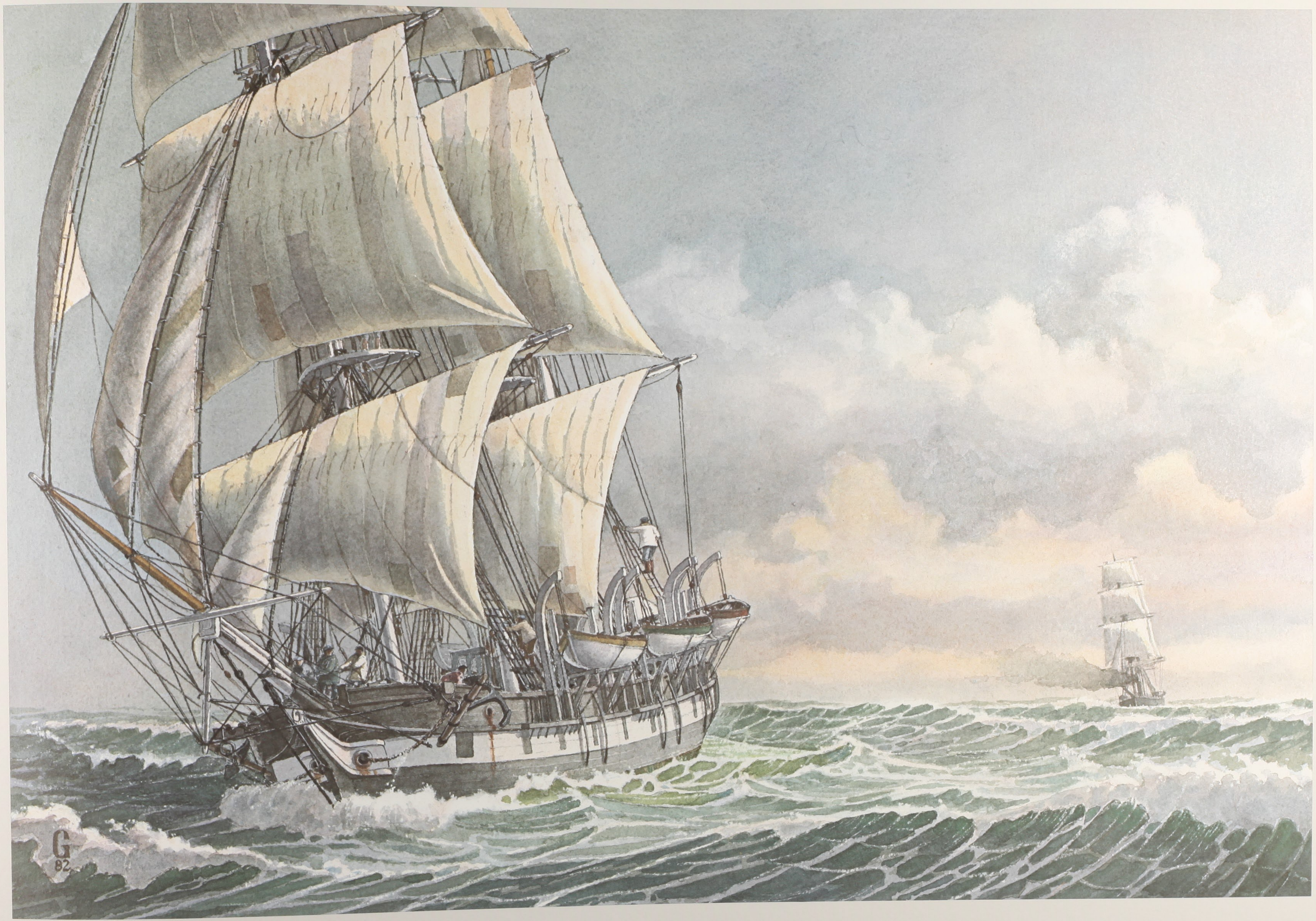
Because he would soon be swamped with prisoners, instead of burning the *Milo*, Waddell forced Hawes to sign a bond for $40,000, payable to the Confederate government at the end of the war, if he would go directly to San Francisco with the men. Captain Hawes sensibly agreed, and, of course, the bond was never paid. The master's mate aboard the *Shenandoah*, Cornelius Hunt, could not resist a dig or two years later when he cheekily reported:

> *this and a number of similar vouchers taken by us during our cruise, have not yet been paid, and if they ever intend to take up these obligations, no better time than the present will ever offer. To be sure the war terminated disastrously to our cause, but we are, therefore, so much the more in need of any trifling sums that*



Bark California and boats — lancing a spent Bowhead

WILLIAM GILKERSON



The bark Jireh Swift pursued by the Confederate ship Shenandoah

WILLIAM GILKERSON

may be owing us. The above amounts, therefore, may be sent to me, care of my publisher, who is hereby authorized to receipt for the same.

In the meantime the two vessels nearest the *Milo* had figured out what was going on and were making all sail to get into a nearby ice field. With her auxiliary power the *Shenandoah* quickly overhauled the bark *Sophia Thornton* and brought her to with a warning shot. The other, the *Jireh Swift*, was a fast bark and under a rising wind made every effort to escape. It took the *Shenandoah* three hours to catch her. She was immediately put to the torch, and the crew was sent in boats to the *Milo* while the *Shenandoah* turned to chase a third ship. This one had a running start, however, and made it to the safety of the ice.

ABANDONING THAT CHASE, Waddell returned to the other whaleships nearby but found that they were now protected by a vast field of drift ice that had moved in on them. The *Shenandoah*'s men were in no mood to challenge the ice floes. Hunt himself saw the irony in this—that the ice which had taken such a toll of whaleships had now become their protector.

Waddell turned back to the *Sophia Thornton*. Anxious to be off after other prizes, he told the *Thornton*'s men that they must go to the *Milo* in their boats, that they were free to take what provisions they wanted with them, but that they must set fire to the ship as they left. As a precaution that they would not merely sail away once the *Shenandoah* was out of sight, he ordered his boarding party to cut down her masts. Hunt described the scene:

As we glided seaward we could see the disabled vessel, with her masts dragging alongside and the paroled prisoners in their whale boats, transferring from her to the Milo *whatever suited their fancy. I have no doubt the craft was thoroughly ransacked, but ere the sun made its brief disappearance below the horizon, a bright tongue of flame shot heavenward, telling us that the prisoners had performed their distasteful task. A more unpleasant duty, I trust, will never be assigned to any of them. It is hard enough to see the oaken cradle in which one has rocked for so many weeks and months destroyed by the incendiary torch, but when necessity compels a sailor to light with his own hand the fire that is to consume the ship he has learned to love, he has good grounds for complaint against the fates.*

Later the same day they came upon a small trading brig, the *Susan Abigail* of San Francisco, carrying a cargo of "guns, pistols, needles, calico, twine and Yankee notions in general" for fur trading. To the dismay of the *Shenandoah*'s men the brig carried newspapers reporting Grant's capture of Richmond, the Confederate capital, on April 3 and Lee's surrender at Appomattox on April 6, as well as Jefferson Davis's flight to Danville and his proclamation that the South would fight on. Papers reporting Lincoln's death on April 15 were also circulating in the fleet. The more whalemen he captured, the more Waddell heard from them that the outcome of the war was a foregone conclusion.

At this point, Waddell must have begun to have doubts about the consequences of his actions. He at least had to consider the possibility that his side had already lost the war (as it had); that he and his ship were without a country; that his actions could be considered piracy (as they were by many).

The following note in Waddell's hand, signed by him and dated June 27, is affixed to one of the pages in the *Shenandoah*'s logbook:

> *The brig "Susan Abigail" sailed from "San Francisco" about the 19th of April bringing [newspapers] to the 17th of April. I read from one of the April papers dispatches for surrender by Gen'l Lee to Gen'l Grant and an announcement of a proclamation issued by President Davis at "Danville" to the people of the South declaring the war would be carried on with renewed vigor.*

In view of the havoc he was causing, and would continue to cause, Waddell wanted to emphasize that he was operating as an officer of the Confederate Navy. As such, he would continue to assume that the Confederacy existed. The fact that he chose to state this in the record suggests that he was in some doubt about the outcome of the war—or possibly that he knew more details of its progress than he was admitting.

In Waddell's defense—and contrary to much of the outcry that would follow—it must be said that if he had news only up to April 17th and if he had ceased operations and retired home to find the South still fighting, then he could have been accused of dereliction of duty. But it also seems that a less stubborn and inflexible man might have suspended action and sought to confirm the evidence before returning to offensive operations.

So Waddell burned the *Susan Abigail* and moved on toward Bering Strait seeking other prizes. But word was going out fast that a raider was loose in the Arctic. Frederick Barker had immediately taken the *Robert Towns* north after his encounter with the "*Petropavlovski*" on June 23. He had headed for Cape Bering and Indian Point where he knew he would find other ships, and while the *Shenandoah* burned the *Jireh Swift* and *Sophia Thornton*, the *Gustave* of Le Havre had lain two miles away. She was lead gray in color. Warped to her and painted the same color was the bark *William Gifford* of New Bedford. At a distance they looked like one vessel. As soon as the *Shenandoah* moved on, the ships separated, the *William Gifford* heading south and Captain Vaulpré taking the *Gustave* north in search of ships he might warn. Vaulpré was repaying an old debt: during the Crimean War he had been warned by an American whaleship that a Russian vessel was after him. The Hawaiian vessel *Kohola* under Captain Barney Cogan, an Irish-American, and *Hae Hawaii* under Captain John Heppingstone, an Australian, had also seen the action on the twenty-third and sailed ahead, warning the fleet.

Certainly the most selfless act was Ebenezer Nye's. As soon as the *Shenandoah* was out of sight of the *Milo*, he and his first mate took two whaleboats and set out for Cape Bering, two hundred miles away, to warn the ships there. It was a risky passage for men in open boats through ice and open water. Also, they had been forced to give their parole that they would go directly to San Francisco, and had Waddell caught them, the consequences would have been severe.

ON JUNE 25 the New Bedford bark *Mercury* was chasing whales in a fresh gale off Cape Bering. "Saw a boat standing in toward the ship from seaward," the log keeper wrote:

Ran down for her. It proved to be Capt. Nye, late of the ship Abigail. He stated that his ship had been burnt by an English pirate in the Okhotsk Sea & had been a prisoner on board of the pirate Shenandoah ever since till [two] days previous. Capt. Nye stated that the ship was within a few miles of us & said if we went any further east we should be in danger. . . . We hauled our wind & spoke the Florida. . . . Corinthian, and Peru & we all put to the westward hoping to keep out of sight.

The *Minerva* under Captain Edward Penniman was near Indian Point when the *Gustave* reached him. Captain Vaulpré came aboard and announced he was direct from Cape Thaddeus where the *Shenandoah* was burning ships. Penniman later wrote:

What to do I did not know. All of my boats were off, and there was such a light air that it was no use to set a signal. Then I thought of an old cannon between decks. We got it up on deck and lashed it down on the gangway. Mrs. Penniman by this time had gone down to breakfast and did not know what we were doing. . . . I thought I might call back my boats by firing the old thing. . . . When the gun went off it rose right up in the air and, coming down on deck, made a great hole on the planking. Everybody was scared half out of their wits, while the concussion was so great that it broke all the glass in the skylight to the cabin. Mrs. Penniman didn't know what had happened.

But not everyone was as receptive to the *Gustave*'s news. Captain Penniman started back to the west to get out of the *Shenandoah*'s path. "While standing on my course I fell in with the *Governor Troup*, Captain E. R. Ashley," he recalled.

I pulled over to him (in one of my boats) and explained what had been told me by the Frenchman. "I don't believe a damned word of it," said Ashley. "It is a damned French trick to get north of us and best us in whaling," was his angry reply, . . . and he parted with me saying that he was going up the strait. . . .

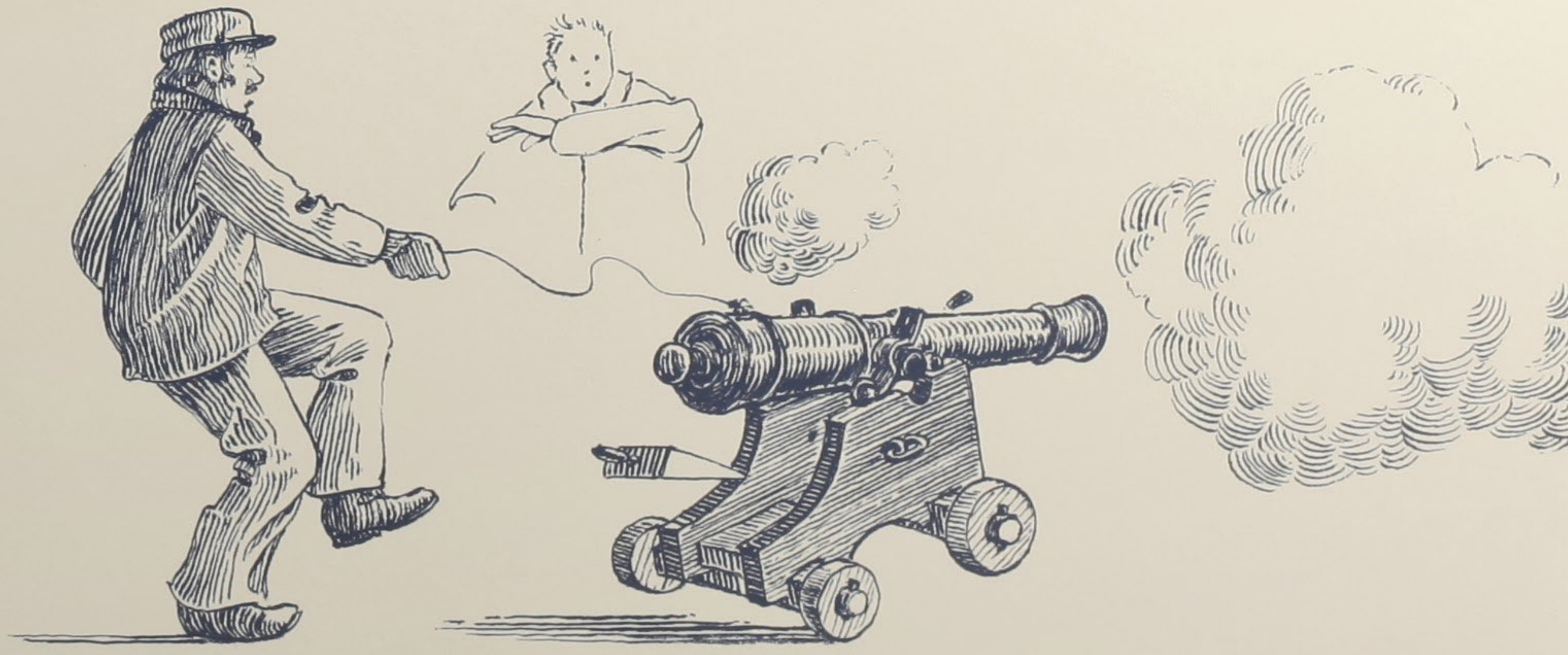
The next day, the *Minerva* was off the west end of Saint Lawrence Island and could see smoke to the northeast.

The man at the mast head reported a ship coming down on us with all sail set. . . . It proved to be the Governor Troup, and Ashley, overhauling us, yelled out: "Come on, Penniman, let's get out of here; that was no French trick; I saw six ships burning after I left you."

On the twenty-fifth in clear weather and light airs Waddell got up steam to go hunting, knowing the whalers couldn't move fast in so little wind. He soon sighted two sails and went after them, but they proved to be a Hawaiian vessel, possibly the brigantine *Victoria*, and a French ship, probably the *Winslow* of Le Havre, and they no doubt went on to the north warning others of the threat. Finally, near Saint Lawrence Island, Waddell came upon the ship *General Williams* of New London cutting in a whale. The *Shenandoah*'s men removed prisoners and set fires. (They usually lit fires in the cabin, forecastle, and main hold and then drove cutting spades through the bottoms of the boats.

At one o'clock the following morning in beautiful clear weather and a near calm, the *Shenandoah* steamed up to three other ships, helpless in the light airs. As the men were burning the *Nimrod*, *William C. Nye*, and *Catharine* of New Bedford, the lookouts sighted five more ships to the north. Now overcrowded with prisoners, and worried that the prisoners might take over his ship, Waddell simply towed the men along behind the *Shenandoah* in twelve whaleboats. Cornelius Hunt described the event:

It was a singular scene upon which we now looked out. Behind us were three blazing ships, wildly drifting amid gigantic fragments of ice; close astern were the twelve whale-boats with their



> *living freight; and ahead of us the five other vessels, now evidently aware of their danger, but seeing no avenue of escape.*

Waddell gave a wide berth to one of the five, the bark *Benjamin Cummings* of New Bedford, because he had learned they had smallpox on board. But he captured three of the remaining four, burning the *Isabella* and *Gypsey*, and sending the *General Pike* to San Francisco with the prisoners aboard and under a $30,000 bond. The other ship was probably E. R. Ashley's *Governor Troup*.

Captain Hudson Winslow of the *Isabella* had the temerity to complain to Waddell that with 200 men on board the *General Pike* they were likely to run out of food before they reached port. Referring to the large number of Hawaiians among the prisoners Waddell replied, "Eat the Kanakas if you get hungry." The crew aboard the *General Pike* never had to resort to cannibalism, but with so many men on board they did have to cook in their try-pots on their way south.

BY NOW WADDELL had realized that his cat could not catch many pigeons if they were on the wing. A stiff north breeze had come up, nullifying the *Shenandoah*'s advantage of auxiliary power. After finishing with the *Isabella* and *Gypsey*, he let the ship's fires go out, hoisted her propeller, lowered her stack, and beat to the north under canvas to avoid alarming the whalers.

On the afternoon of the twenty-seventh they raised several sails to the north. In that breeze Waddell knew he couldn't take them all, so he kept well away from the ships, hoping that the wind would die. Early on the twenty-eighth the wind fell calm, and, as the light improved, they spotted sails all around them. They got up steam and set off on what was to be their last and most destructive day's action and the last offensive action of the Civil War.

At 6:30 A.M. they were twelve miles south southwest of the Diomede Islands. They decided to go for the southernmost ship. At 10:00 A.M. they caught the bark *Waverly* of New Bedford, took thirty-three prisoners aboard, set fire to her, and were off again at 11:00 A.M. Approaching East Cape at 1:30 P.M., they spotted ten ships clustered together, nine standing by the crippled *Brunswick*.

Soon Waddell's boats had fanned out among the fleet, and there was nothing the whalemen could do. The only resistance came from Thomas Young, the feisty old captain of the *Favorite* of Fairhaven. As part owner of the ship he was loath to see her taken by a "pirate." Young, nearly seventy years old, loaded his bomb gun, armed his crew with muskets, and climbed onto the dog-house roof as the *Shenandoah*'s boat approached.

The boat retired to the *Shenandoah*, which Waddell then brought around so that her guns were trained on the *Favorite*. The crew, realizing that this puny resistance was useless and perhaps dangerous, had by this time secretly removed the cap from Young's bomb gun, and, as the boat returned from the *Shenandoah*, made preparations to leave the whaleship. But Young, who had apparently liberally fortified himself with liquor, stood his ground.

The officer in the boat ordered Young to strike his colors. "I'll see you damned first," was the reply.

"If you don't, I'll shoot you."

"Shoot and be damned."

The officer then ordered his men to board the *Favorite*. Young raised his gun and pulled the trigger, but the hammer only clicked. That done, he realized resistance was useless, and surrendered.

Alexander Starbuck wrote twelve years later in his *History of the American Whale Fishery*:

> *His inhuman captors, who were unable to appreciate bravery,*

put him in irons in the topgallant forecastle, and robbed him of his money, his watch, and even of his shirt-studs.

In fact, Young's captors did appreciate his bravery, although several thought that at least a measure of his courage was drawn from a bottle:

When he came on board, it was evident he had been seeking spiritous consolation, indeed to be plain about it, he was at least three sheets in the wind, but by general consent he was voted to be the bravest and most resolute man we captured during our cruise.

That day Waddell burned the *Brunswick*, *Hillman*, *Nassau*, *Isaac Howland*, *Martha 2nd*, *Favorite*, *Covington*, and *Congress 2nd*—all of New Bedford, save the *Favorite* of Fairhaven, which lies on the eastern shore of New Bedford harbor. The *Nile* he bonded for $41,000 and sent to San Francisco with 190 men in addition to her crew. He found that the captain of the *James Maury* had died, leaving his widow and two small children aboard, so he bonded that vessel as well and sent her to Honolulu with 222 persons in all, plus the deceased captain, whose remains had been preserved in a barrel of whiskey.

Also at East Cape that day the *Shenandoah* apparently passed close to the brig *Kohola* of Honolulu. Captain Barney Cogan hailed the ship:

"Have you heard the news?"

"No, what is it?"

"Lee has surrendered, the North has beaten the South, the war is over, and you are done for."

"You go to Hell."

Waddell moved on north in search of other prizes, but the word was by now well ahead of him, magnified tenfold in the telling. By June 29 most of the fleet had been warned and had taken evasive action.

The ships scattered like pigeons, heading in all directions for safety. Some went northeast to Cape Lisburne, where the *Gratitude* was stove and sank, trying to get the protection of the ice. Others went northwest to hide behind Burney (Kolyuchin) Island. In the Anadyr some went to Holy Cross Bay and Mercury Harbor. One went east into Norton Sound and holed up in Golovnin Bay, and many headed south to Saint Paul Island, Bristol Bay, or the Aleutians, or simply abandoned their cruises and went to Hawaii.

The bark *Martha*, warned by the *Robert Towns*, headed with the *Cornelius Howland*, *Eliza Adams*, *Oliver Crocker*, and *Louisiana* for the inner reaches of Kotzebue Sound and anchored at Chamisso Island for three weeks. On their way in, the *Louisiana* ran aground and was wrecked. She and the *Gratitude*, therefore, indirectly became the twenty-first and twenty-second victims of the *Shenandoah*'s Arctic cruise.

A measure of the *Shenandoah*'s threat can be seen in the fact that few ships returned to the whaling grounds before late July, although by June 29, the raider, unknown to them, had already headed south to the Pacific.

Waddell's abrupt departure is difficult to explain from reading his own account. If he believed that as many as sixty whaleships had passed north of Bering Strait, as Hunt says he did (the actual number was probably closer to half that figure), then why did he spend less than twenty-four hours there?

Waddell complained that the ice was too threatening to allow them to operate safely. He wrote:

*In consequence of [*Shenandoah*'s] great length, the immensity of the ice and floes, the danger of being shut up in the Arctic Ocean for several months, I was obliged to turn her prow southward. . . .*

But a few pages later he gave another reason:

If intelligence of my movements had reached any of the enemy's

> *cruisers . . . or specially from the ransomed ships which were sent from Behring's Sea, it would have been easy for them to blockade* Shenandoah *or force her into action.*

Neither of these statements is convincing. If a large number of whaleships were north of Bering Strait in the course of their normal cruises, then presumably the *Shenandoah*—the only vessel with the advantage of auxiliary power—could have worked the ice safely. Also, there were only a handful of Union warships in the Pacific at the time, and it was well known that they were fully engaged in guarding San Francisco and her supply lines to the Panama Railroad. Similarly, it is unlikely that the news of the *Shenandoah*'s position could have reached anyone only six days after the release of the first ship bonded in the Bering Sea, nor would it have been a simple matter to locate the *Shenandoah* even if word of the raider's whereabouts had reached a Northern warship.

A clue to Waddell's behavior can be found in Midshipman Francis Chew's diary. He mentions they had captured newspapers that brought them up to the events of April 22; this date is a week later than the date that Waddell claimed to have known of, and April 22 was only four days before Johnston's surrender of the Southern Army to General Sherman. The news by that date provided incontrovertible evidence of the swift disintegration of the Confederacy. "The perusal of these papers has deeply affected us all," Chew wrote, "making due allowances we know that great reverses have befallen us, and that our country is in a very perilous condition, if not over run. Under these circumstances our anxiety may be imagined."

Waddell is unconvincing when he claims that he planned, once back in the Pacific, merely to go to San Francisco and blockade that port. It is more probable that he could no longer ignore the information about the course of the war, and his abrupt disengagement from action in the Arctic, when many prizes still remained there, was due to his hunch that the Confederacy had collapsed. Furthermore, it seems likely that his move to the waters off San Francisco was to gather information on the progress of the war.

The worst was confirmed on August 2 when the *Shenandoah* overhauled the British bark *Barracouta*, thirteen days out of San Francisco. Francis Chew wrote:

> *From her we received the sad intelligence of the overthrow of the Confederate Government! . . . We are exiles! Our situation now is . . . very dangerous. The powers which extended to us the "Rights of Belligerents" have withdrawn them and excluded us from their ports. We are . . . now called "pirates" and will be picked up by any man-of-war that happens to see us.*

With that news Waddell ordered his ship disarmed. The guns were dismounted and, along with all firearms, placed in the hold; a note was made in the log that all offensive actions had ceased against vessels of the United States.

With foreign ports closed to him, Waddell at first set a course for Australia but soon changed his mind and steered for England, despite the possibility of being intercepted by a U.S. Naval vessel on the way. The men hoisted her screw, lowered the stack and whitewashed it, boarded up the gun ports, and generally set about disguising the ship as best they could.

Waddell evaded all attempts to catch him, rounded Cape Horn safely, and reached Liverpool on November 5, dropping anchor for the first time in more than eight months, having come 17,000 miles directly from the Arctic Ocean. Not only had the *Shenandoah* become the only Confederate vessel to circumnavigate the world, sailing 58,000 miles, but it had also flown the Confederate colors more than six months after the end of the Civil War. When her cruise ended, she had taken 1053 prisoners, destroyed thirty-four vessels valued at $1,361,983, and caused the loss of two more.

IV The Discovery of Wrangel Island

BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR, once the whaleships made their way through Bering Strait, they avoided close contact with the ice. They concentrated on hunting whales in the southern Chukchi Sea until August, then cruised in the waters north of Cape Lisburne, waiting for bowheads to appear. The year 1857 had been a good one for the few ships that returned to Bering Strait from the Okhotsk Sea, but the following three seasons were poor. It was not until 1861 that their fortunes looked bright again, and it was only then that the whalemen concluded that the whale stocks of the western Arctic had not been fished out by the massive assault of the early fifties.

The good weather, open seas, and plentiful whales of 1861 were followed by even better conditions in 1862, and it was in that year that the whaleship *John Howland*, cruising in advance for the fleet, sighted "Plover Island," a mysterious headland that had been sighted indistinctly by a Royal Naval vessel only a few years before. The following year was even more ice-free, and at least three vessels sighted "Plover Island." The remarkably open water permitted other ships to sail near the uncharted land in 1865 and 1866 as well; in 1865 the *Oriole*'s mate wrote to the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* that in staying out of sight of the *Shenandoah* he had reached 72°20′ N and "having run 50 miles off the chart, concluded to work south again."

However, 1867 proved to be the best year of all. On their way north the whalemen learned from the natives that there had been almost two months of southerly winds during the winter. Almost from the start they found very little ice to bar their way. The *President* sailed through Bering Strait without trouble on June 4, more than two weeks earlier than in a normal year, and others may have preceded her. By July 16 forty-five vessels were cruising near Herald Island. But as free as the seas were of ice, they were equally free of whales, causing one of the officers aboard the *Martha* to write on August 24, "Saw Herald and Plover Islands, 37 sails, and 1 whale." Another claimed that the fleet—more than eighty vessels—had taken only twenty-five whales in August.

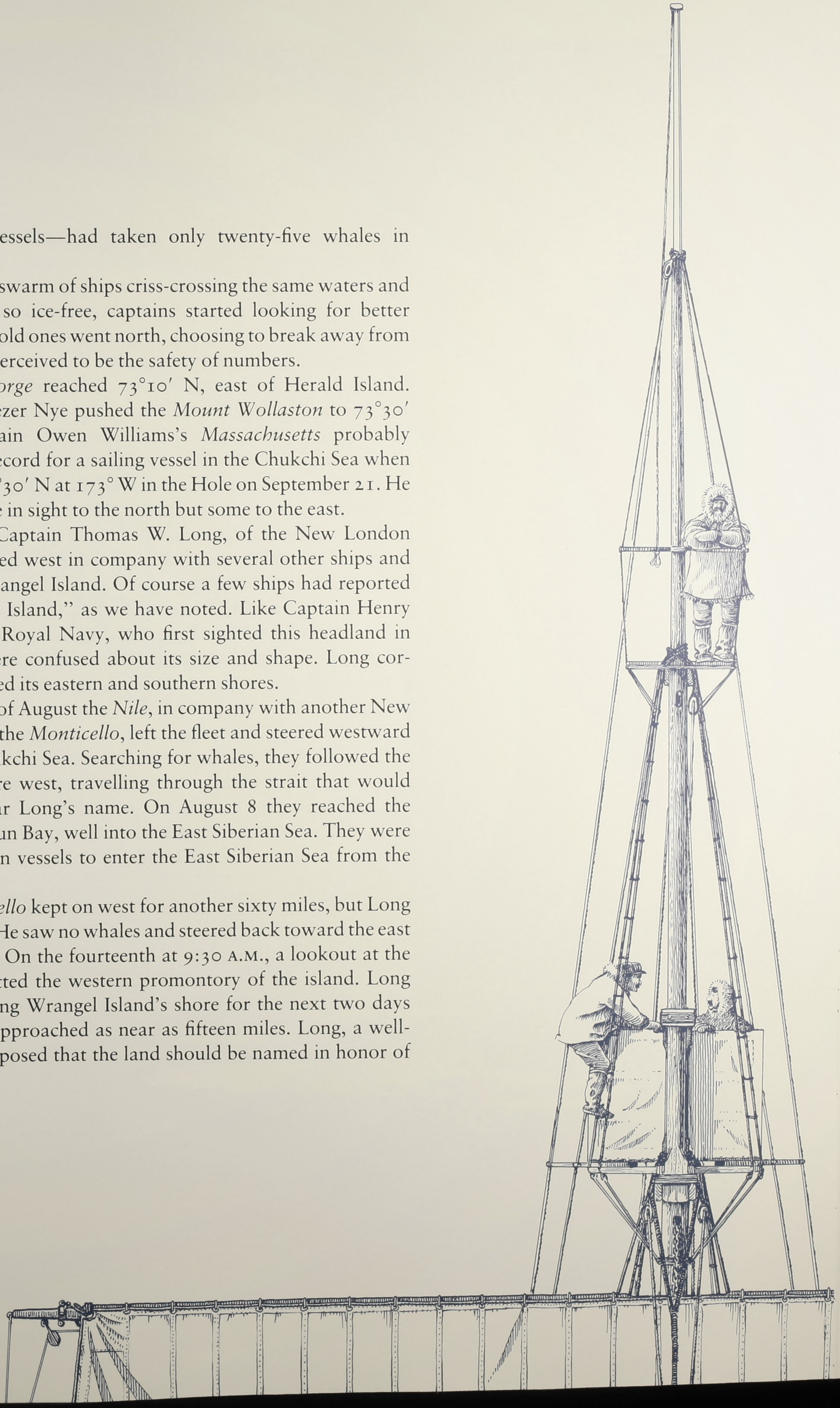
With such a swarm of ships criss-crossing the same waters and with the seas so ice-free, captains started looking for better hunting. The bold ones went north, choosing to break away from what the rest perceived to be the safety of numbers.

The *St. George* reached 73°10′ N, east of Herald Island. Captain Ebenezer Nye pushed the *Mount Wollaston* to 73°30′ N, and Captain Owen Williams's *Massachusetts* probably achieved the record for a sailing vessel in the Chukchi Sea when he attained 74°30′ N at 173° W in the Hole on September 21. He reported no ice in sight to the north but some to the east.

Eventually Captain Thomas W. Long, of the New London bark *Nile*, sailed west in company with several other ships and discovered Wrangel Island. Of course a few ships had reported seeing "Plover Island," as we have noted. Like Captain Henry Kellett of the Royal Navy, who first sighted this headland in 1849, they were confused about its size and shape. Long correctly delineated its eastern and southern shores.

On the first of August the *Nile*, in company with another New London bark, the *Monticello*, left the fleet and steered westward out of the Chukchi Sea. Searching for whales, they followed the mainland shore west, travelling through the strait that would eventually bear Long's name. On August 8 they reached the mouth of Chaun Bay, well into the East Siberian Sea. They were the first foreign vessels to enter the East Siberian Sea from the ocean.

The *Monticello* kept on west for another sixty miles, but Long turned north. He saw no whales and steered back toward the east on August 10. On the fourteenth at 9:30 A.M., a lookout at the masthead spotted the western promontory of the island. Long sailed east along Wrangel Island's shore for the next two days and at times approached as near as fifteen miles. Long, a well-read man, proposed that the land should be named in honor of



Baron Ferdinand von Wrangell. In the 1820s Wrangell had explored on foot along the Siberian coast and had learned from the natives that "one might, on a clear summer's day, descry snow covered mountains at a great distance to the north."

The *Reindeer*, *Nautilus*, *Corinthian*, and *Massachusetts* cruised near the island that summer. Like the *Nile* and *Monticello* they sent out reports of their discovery, and like the *Nile* and *Monticello*, none sent a party ashore; they were searching for whales, not geographical precedences. With their lead lines constantly in action as they prowled the shallow and uncharted waters around the newly discovered island, they found crystal clear water.

The whalemen had learned by trial and error that clear waters contained no whales; murkier seas often indicate the presence of "animalculae," or plankton, upon which the oceans' food chains are built and upon which the whales feed. As soon as the whalemen were confident that the waters surrounding Wrangel Island contained few, if any, whales, they deserted the area. Only rarely in the next half century would whaleships come within sight of Wrangel Island.

Sadly, the fate of one whaleship would forever be associated with the island. In 1913 the old steam brig *Karluk*, which had lain idle in San Francisco for several years, was bought by the Canadian government. She was to be the flagship of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, exploring the western Arctic. She was under the command of Captain Robert Bartlett, a skillful pilot in the eastern Arctic. It was no doubt his long experience in those waters that led him to the tragic loss of his ship.

The summer of 1913 was exceptionally icy on the north coast of Alaska, and soon after the *Karluk* rounded Point Barrow, Bartlett found his way east blocked by dense floes. He then violated the cardinal rule of Beaufort Sea navigation. Instead of holding near shore and waiting for the ice to open, he ran down an offshore lead, hoping to find clearer water. He found a cul-de-sac and soon the ice closed in behind him.

In the Baffin Bay his situation would not have been perilous, for the ice, driven by the current, gradually disperses as it moves south. In the western Arctic, however, the pack ice rarely releases its grip. The *Karluk* was carried west for several months and then crushed in mid-winter near Wrangel Island. The passengers had to scramble over many miles of broken ice to reach the island. A number of them never made it to shore. Those that did scratched out a miserable existence until their rescue the next summer.

Wrangel Island discovered by the bark Nile, August 14, 1876

WILLIAM GILKERSON

V The Disaster of 1871

AS THE WALRUS SEASON drew to an end in July 1871, the fleet, expecting to find the open conditions of the previous years, began to gather near Cape Lisburne. To the surprise of the men, they encountered heavy ice south of Point Lay. By August 3 they were still three miles from Icy Cape, and the next day they had to retreat because the ice was coming back down on them. Not until August 6 did the ice lift enough to allow the ships to sneak around Blossom Shoals and tack northeastward in the strip of open water between the land and the heavy, closely packed ice four or five miles away. By noon the next day they had reached the limit of navigation a few miles north of Wainwright Inlet. The wind died and stayed light. By August 10, twenty ships were waiting there to work their way to Point Barrow. So sturdy was the ice that the *Seneca*'s crew made fast to it with her cutting blocks and falls before sending her boats out to cruise among the thirty or so ships that were already milling about in the area.

In a normal or even in a moderately bad year for ice on the Alaska coast, this would have been a reasonable procedure. Ordinarily it was possible for a sailing ship to reach Point Barrow in the early days of August. A warm, sunny spring, combined with a couple of brief, violent gales to churn up the ice, followed by offshore winds, will complete the job of clearing the ice off the Alaska coast that is begun by the warm current running northeast along the shore out of Bering Strait. The whalemen could not have known that several times a century the atmospheric conditions directly contradict this pattern. In the spring a strong stationary high-pressure system can develop over northeastern Siberia, resulting in cold onshore winds that retard the ice decay all spring. When such a situation develops, the current is the main factor in opening the ice near shore, and it was into such a cul-de-sac that the ships sailed in 1871.

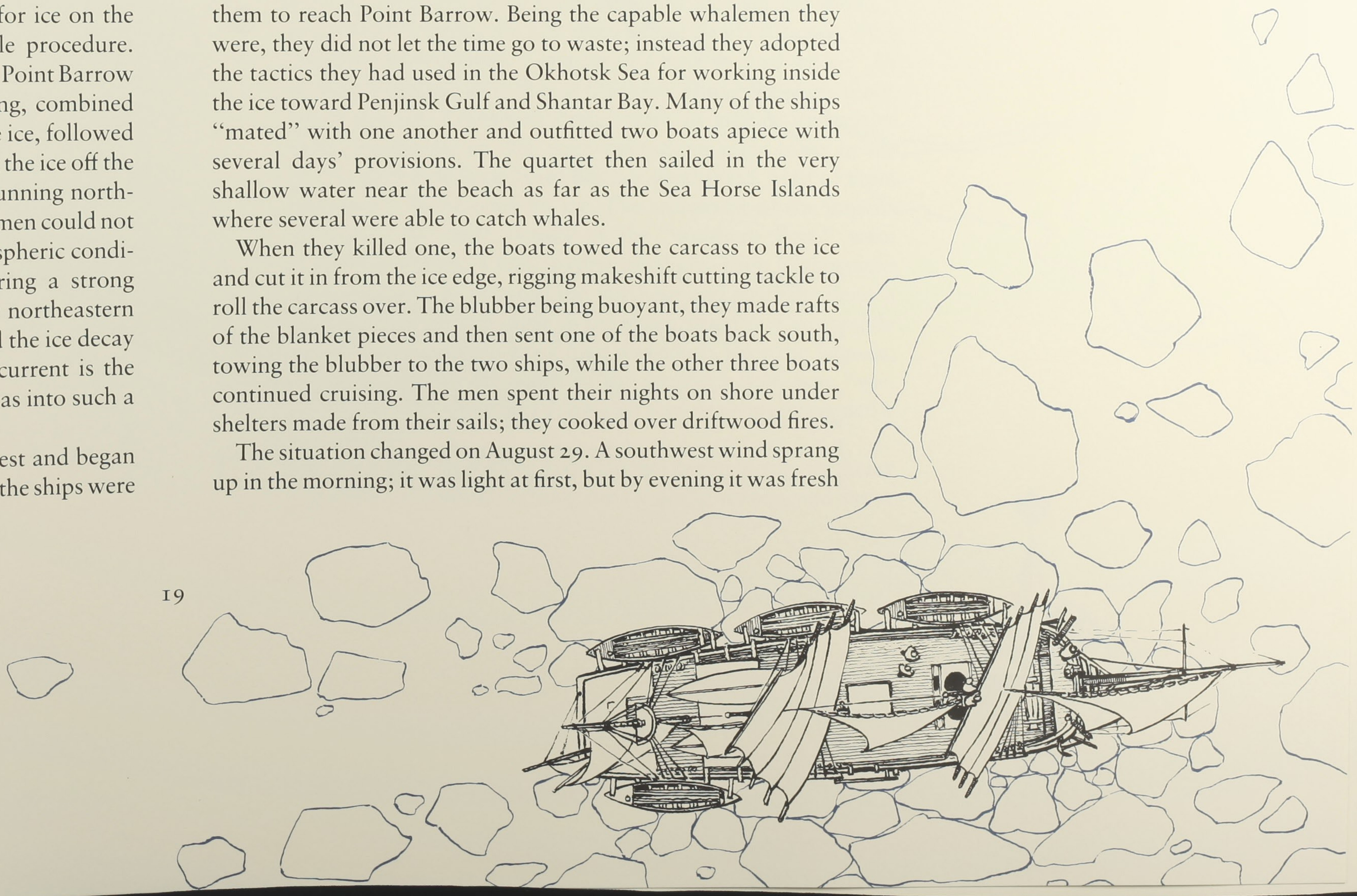
On August 11 the wind swung into the northwest and began pushing the ice toward shore. It closed quickly and the ships were helpless to do anything but to scurry around for protection under the lee of heavy grounded floes. At the same time the ice compacted, closing all its small leads and catching many of the whaleboats cruising up to six miles away from their ships. Amid the tightening ice pack, the crews were forced to abandon their boats temporarily and to make their way on foot to their ships over the broken and piled floes. The ice closed in on the *Seneca*, farthest to the north, and her crew had to use their blubber hooks and lines to warp their way through the floes into the open water near shore that in many places was only a mile or less in width.

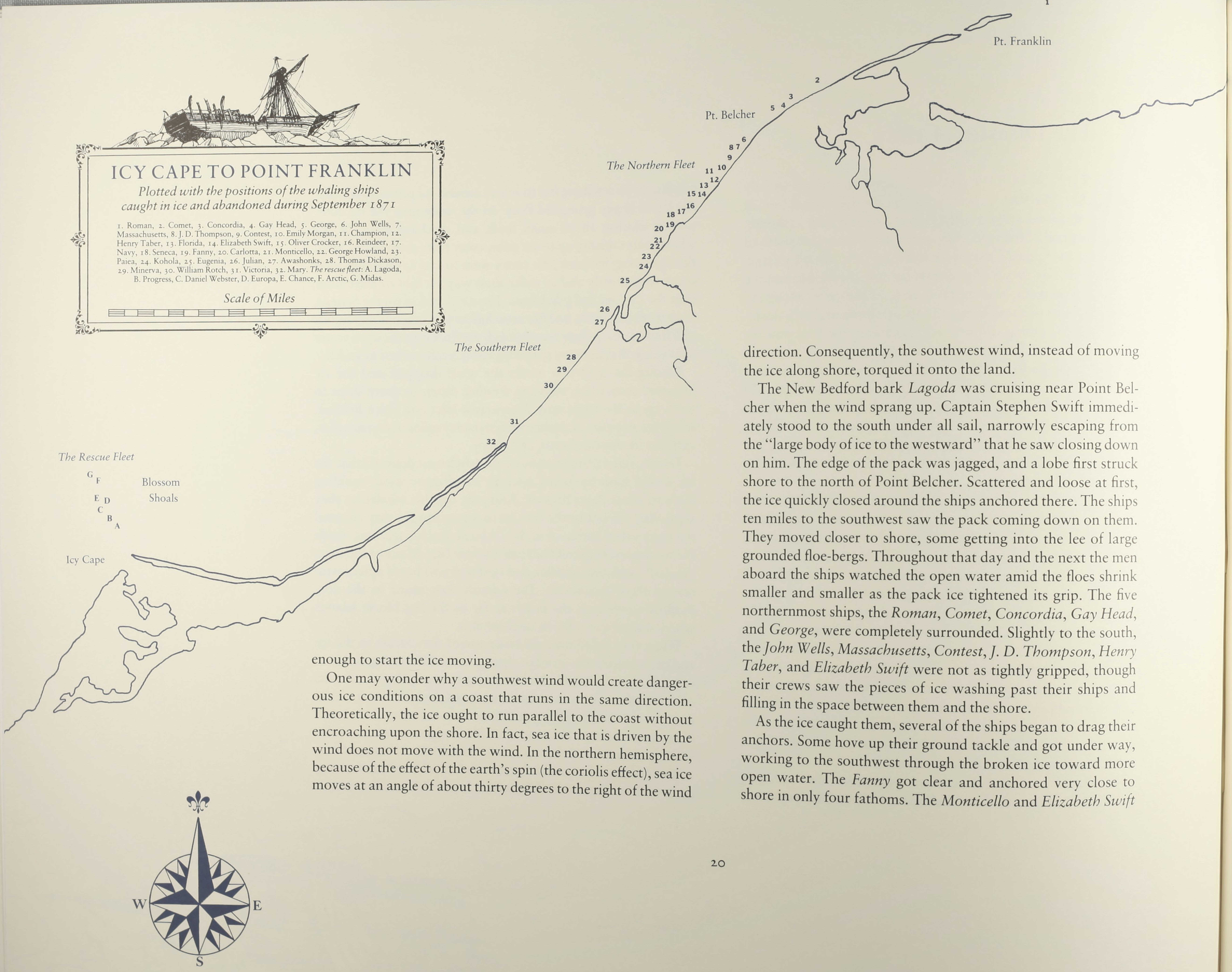
During the next two weeks the wind dropped and the ice loosened somewhat, allowing another dozen or more ships to work up to the coast near Wainwright Inlet and Point Belcher. All of the ships lay at anchor within twenty miles of one another, with the ice ahead, abeam, and astern.

During this fortnight none of the whalemen doubted that the ice would soon be forced open by an offshore wind, enabling them to reach Point Barrow. Being the capable whalemen they were, they did not let the time go to waste; instead they adopted the tactics they had used in the Okhotsk Sea for working inside the ice toward Penjinsk Gulf and Shantar Bay. Many of the ships "mated" with one another and outfitted two boats apiece with several days' provisions. The quartet then sailed in the very shallow water near the beach as far as the Sea Horse Islands where several were able to catch whales.

When they killed one, the boats towed the carcass to the ice and cut it in from the ice edge, rigging makeshift cutting tackle to roll the carcass over. The blubber being buoyant, they made rafts of the blanket pieces and then sent one of the boats back south, towing the blubber to the two ships, while the other three boats continued cruising. The men spent their nights on shore under shelters made from their sails; they cooked over driftwood fires.

The situation changed on August 29. A southwest wind sprang up in the morning; it was light at first, but by evening it was fresh





ICY CAPE TO POINT FRANKLIN

Plotted with the positions of the whaling ships caught in ice and abandoned during September 1871

1. Roman, 2. Comet, 3. Concordia, 4. Gay Head, 5. George, 6. John Wells, 7. Massachusetts, 8. J. D. Thompson, 9. Contest, 10. Emily Morgan, 11. Champion, 12. Henry Taber, 13. Florida, 14. Elizabeth Swift, 15. Oliver Crocker, 16. Reindeer, 17. Navy, 18. Seneca, 19. Fanny, 20. Carlotta, 21. Monticello, 22. George Howland, 23. Paiea, 24. Kohola, 25. Eugenia, 26. Julian, 27. Awashonks, 28. Thomas Dickason, 29. Minerva, 30. William Rotch, 31. Victoria, 32. Mary. *The rescue fleet*: A. Lagoda, B. Progress, C. Daniel Webster, D. Europa, E. Chance, F. Arctic, G. Midas.

enough to start the ice moving.

One may wonder why a southwest wind would create dangerous ice conditions on a coast that runs in the same direction. Theoretically, the ice ought to run parallel to the coast without encroaching upon the shore. In fact, sea ice that is driven by the wind does not move with the wind. In the northern hemisphere, because of the effect of the earth's spin (the coriolis effect), sea ice moves at an angle of about thirty degrees to the right of the wind direction. Consequently, the southwest wind, instead of moving the ice along shore, torqued it onto the land.

The New Bedford bark *Lagoda* was cruising near Point Belcher when the wind sprang up. Captain Stephen Swift immediately stood to the south under all sail, narrowly escaping from the "large body of ice to the westward" that he saw closing down on him. The edge of the pack was jagged, and a lobe first struck shore to the north of Point Belcher. Scattered and loose at first, the ice quickly closed around the ships anchored there. The ships ten miles to the southwest saw the pack coming down on them. They moved closer to shore, some getting into the lee of large grounded floe-bergs. Throughout that day and the next the men aboard the ships watched the open water amid the floes shrink smaller and smaller as the pack ice tightened its grip. The five northernmost ships, the *Roman*, *Comet*, *Concordia*, *Gay Head*, and *George*, were completely surrounded. Slightly to the south, the *John Wells*, *Massachusetts*, *Contest*, *J. D. Thompson*, *Henry Taber*, and *Elizabeth Swift* were not as tightly gripped, though their crews saw the pieces of ice washing past their ships and filling in the space between them and the shore.

As the ice caught them, several of the ships began to drag their anchors. Some hove up their ground tackle and got under way, working to the southwest through the broken ice toward more open water. The *Fanny* got clear and anchored very close to shore in only four fathoms. The *Monticello* and *Elizabeth Swift* also got clear but had not gone far before they ran aground on a shoal. The crews from many of the nearby ships went aboard to help shift their cargoes and get them afloat.

By August 31 the ice had stopped moving—temporarily. Several of the ships still had their boats off cruising for whales, but some of the officers in the fleet had begun to understand the possible outcome of their situation. Captain Timothy Packard of the *Henry Taber* wrote, "Oh how many of this ship's company will live to see the last day of next August? God only knows. I will trust to his wise hand."

The next day, September 1, it again began to blow out of the southwest. It was a light wind, but enough to set the ice in motion. The *Roman*, northernmost of the fleet, was anchored off Point Franklin, protected by a piece of grounded ice while cutting in a "stinker," a decomposing whale. The southwest wind began to raise the water level, as it does on that coast. (On the northwest coast of Arctic Alaska, the tidal range is only about half a foot; winds have far greater effect on the height of the water—westerlies raise it and easterlies lower it.) Soon the *Roman* was naked, her protective ice floes having drifted north in the current. The men moved her behind another grounded floe. They moored her there in fifty-two feet of water, but the current soon broke that floe apart, and at 11 A.M. the drift ice drove in with such force that it not only stove in her stern but it went right under the hull, raising the ship, driving her over, and stoving in her whole side. The crew worked frantically. They lowered her three port boats onto the ice and dragged them out of the way as her spars fell. Forty minutes after the first contact, only a little of the ship was left above the ice.

The crew panicked. Surrounded by a jumble of grinding, moving ice, without any open water nearby, they lost all sense of coherent action. Captain Jared Jernegan saw that they must get the boats to open water if they were to reach the safety of another ship. He put sixteen men on each boat to haul them over the steep pressure ridges, and, with a pistol in hand, he kept them at it. He led them over the broken ice, testing its thickness with a blubber spade as he went. Once they reached open water he distributed his thirty-eight men in the boats and sailed twenty miles to the nearest ships not yet enclosed in the ice.

The *Comet* of Honolulu, the ship nearest the *Roman*, was the next to go. At 1:00 the next morning, "she was pinched until her timbers snapped and the stern was forced out, and hung suspended for three or four days." When Captain Packard of the *Henry Taber* saw the *Comet*'s ensign at half mast he went to her in his boats to offer assistance. He found Captain da Silva and his crew abandoning ship. Captain Knowles of the *George Howland* bought the entire ship and cargo for $13.00.

NEARBY, things were not much better. "The main body of the ice pack kept steadily advancing toward the land, driving the grounded ice over the shoals," wrote William Earle, the first mate of the *Emily Morgan*. "We now have no more than a quarter of a mile of land water." By then it had become clear that of the thirty remaining ships there, twenty-two, the "northern fleet," were in greater immediate danger, strung out as they were over about eight miles in the narrow shore lead from Point Belcher southward. Half of them were already surrounded by ice. The remainder of the imprisoned ships, the eight vessels of the "southern fleet," were grouped less tightly, a little farther off shore, from Wainwright Inlet southward. In between the northern and southern fleets a lobe of ice was pressed close to the shore, making it impossible for the northern ships to work their way south. Even the *Lagoda*, at Icy Cape, far to the south of the southern fleet, was "surrounded with ice." The men knew that they desperately needed a northeasterly.

On Thursday, September 7, the current began to run northeast at the speed of a knot, carrying the ice along with it, and those ships that could still maneuver tried to work their way inshore into whatever water remained to avoid being crushed or carried away to the north. The next day a lobe of ice pressed down on the southern fleet, grounding in five and a half feet of water to the south of them. It stove the *Awashonks*, nipped the *Julian*, and snapped the rudder off the *Eugenia*. The *Awashonks* was sold at auction for $16.

On Saturday, September 9, the captains in the northern fleet faced the likelihood that their ships would not escape and saw that they must act quickly to save themselves. In scouting as far as ten miles south of their position, they found no clear water deep enough to move one of the larger ships. Holding a meeting, they decided to lighten the smallest vessel in the northern fleet, the 270-ton brig *Kohola* of Honolulu, to try to get her south inside the ice. The *Kohola* would then go in search of the remainder of the Arctic whaling fleet. The captains assumed other ships must be cruising in ice-free water outside Blossom Shoals.

The captains sent their men down to the *Kohola* to put her water, oil, stores, and other moveables on board the *Carlotta*. When they had finished and got her going, she was able to cover only a few miles before she grounded in six feet of water on the sand bar that projects off the mouth of Wainwright Inlet and on which the ice had grounded in five and a half feet. There was nothing they could do.

The next day some of the captains sent their men four or five miles farther south to the San Francisco trading brig *Victoria* in the southern fleet. As she was only 149 tons, they hoped she could be lightened enough to work around the lobe of ice that rested on shore south of the southern fleet. She failed. With their hopes dashed, the men knew that they would have to abandon their ships. Wintering would be impossible on this exposed coast, provisioned as they were for only a few more months. They would have to make their way south in their whaleboats at least as far as Icy Cape, more than sixty miles from the northernmost vessel.

On board all the ships the men set to work bagging provisions and clothing, making boat covers, and raising the boats' gunwales to keep out the spray. They mounted false keels on the hulls to keep them from being stove as the boats were dragged over the ice. The hulls were sheathed with copper to keep the ice from wearing through the planks. This last precaution was most important because young skim ice acts like sandpaper and can wear through thin planking in a matter of hours. To make matters worse, that night was cold and at dawn the men found an inch of young ice in places on the water inshore.

That day, the eleventh, as the ice was "slowly narrowing the already narrow strip" of water, the captains began to send their boats south to relay loads of provisions to Icy Cape and to tell the ships in clear water that more than a thousand whalemen—as well as some women and children—needed their help.

The same day Captain D. R. Frazer of the ship *Florida*, of San Francisco, commanding a group of three whaleboats, reached the *Lagoda* ten miles from Icy Cape. He learned that there were seven ships nearby, two in clear water southwest of the shoals and the rest in easy ice inside the shoals and likely to get out soon. The word was sent out among the seven. All agreed to stand by to take the men aboard. The men on the seven ships understood full well their own precarious situation in this risky industry. If not now, then sometime in the future it was likely they would have to rely on others for similar help.

"Tell them all," said Captain James Dowden of the bark *Progress*, "I will wait for them as long as I have an anchor left or a spar to carry a sail."

On Tuesday, September 12, Captain Benjamin Dexter put off from the *Emily Morgan* to take his wife to Icy Cape; as William Earle, his mate, wrote, "All hope of saving this ship or any of the others has entirely vanished. We can only expect to escape with our lives, if even that."

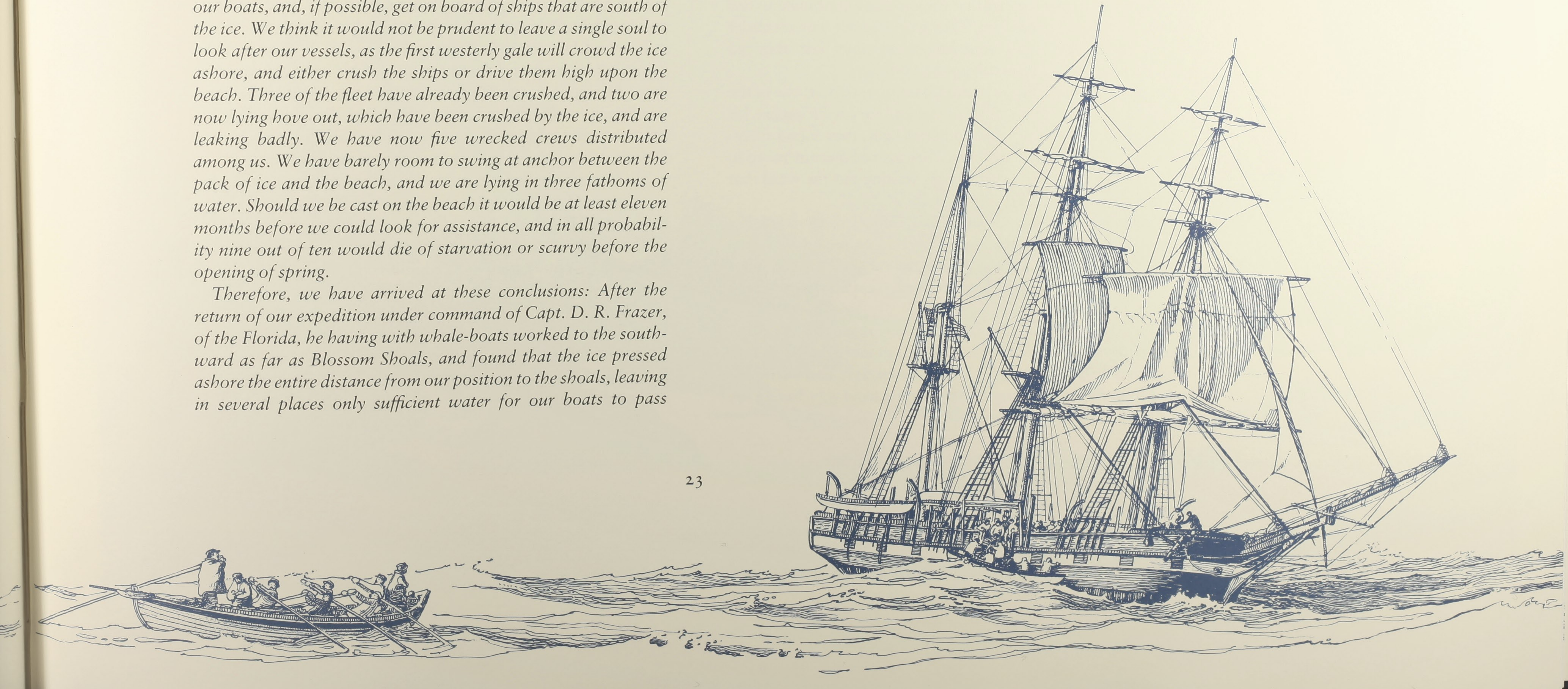
CAPTAIN FRAZER returned with his news to the northern fleet at 10 A.M. As the wind rose in the southwest and the ice crept in closer, the captains met aboard the *Florida*. They drew up the following document.

Point Belcher, Arctic Ocean, Sept. 12, 1871

Know all men by these presents, that we, the undersigned, masters of whale-ships now lying at Point Belcher, after holding a meeting concerning our dreadful situation, have all come to the conclusion that our ships cannot be got out this year, and there being no harbor that we can get our vessels into, and not having provisions enough to feed our crews to exceed three months, and being in a barren country, where there is neither food nor fuel to be obtained, we feel ourselves under the painful necessity of abandoning our vessels, and trying to work our way south with our boats, and, if possible, get on board of ships that are south of the ice. We think it would not be prudent to leave a single soul to look after our vessels, as the first westerly gale will crowd the ice ashore, and either crush the ships or drive them high upon the beach. Three of the fleet have already been crushed, and two are now lying hove out, which have been crushed by the ice, and are leaking badly. We have now five wrecked crews distributed among us. We have barely room to swing at anchor between the pack of ice and the beach, and we are lying in three fathoms of water. Should we be cast on the beach it would be at least eleven months before we could look for assistance, and in all probability nine out of ten would die of starvation or scurvy before the opening of spring.

Therefore, we have arrived at these conclusions: After the return of our expedition under command of Capt. D. R. Frazer, of the Florida, he having with whale-boats worked to the southward as far as Blossom Shoals, and found that the ice pressed ashore the entire distance from our position to the shoals, leaving in several places only sufficient water for our boats to pass through, and this liable at any moment to be frozen over during the twenty-four hours, which would cut off our retreat, even by the boats, as Captain Frazer had to work through a considerable quantity of young ice during his expedition, which cut up his boats badly.

A hundred boats were already heading south, relaying provisions to the ships in clear water when on Wednesday the thirteenth, the ice crushed the bark *Fanny* and dragged the bark *George* past the *Gay Head*, smashing her jibboom. There was no improvement in conditions on the fourteenth. At noon the remaining crew on board the *Emily Morgan* paid out all the chain



on both her anchors, and at 1:30 P.M., wrote William Earle, "with sad heart [I] ordered all the men into the boats and with a last look over the decks abandoned the ship to the mercy of the elements."

The *Emily Morgan*'s men worked their way south in light airs with a hundred other boats in sight. All the ships they passed were either already abandoned or their crews were in the last stages of leaving them. The last ship they passed inshore was the brig *Victoria*, "hard aground and lying well over on her side."

As night fell the wind increased, and the heavy, lowering clouds became blacker and blacker until the men in the boats could only see a few feet ahead and were in danger of stoving their fragile craft on the chunks of ice floating in the channel. Sighting fire where some other crews had hauled their boats up, they went ashore. After making coffee they shoved off again into the darkness, despite the fact that the wind had continued to rise and was driving in a cold rain. They worked their way on under double reefed mainsails, sounding continually lest they go aground in the dark and break up their boats.

Although the wind began to moderate, at 1:30 A.M. one of the boats was stove, hitting a piece of ice, and they went ashore for some quick repairs. By 7 A.M. in better light, they found themselves twenty miles from Icy Cape. They arrived there at 10:30 to find twenty-five or thirty other boats waiting out the wind that had again come up strong.

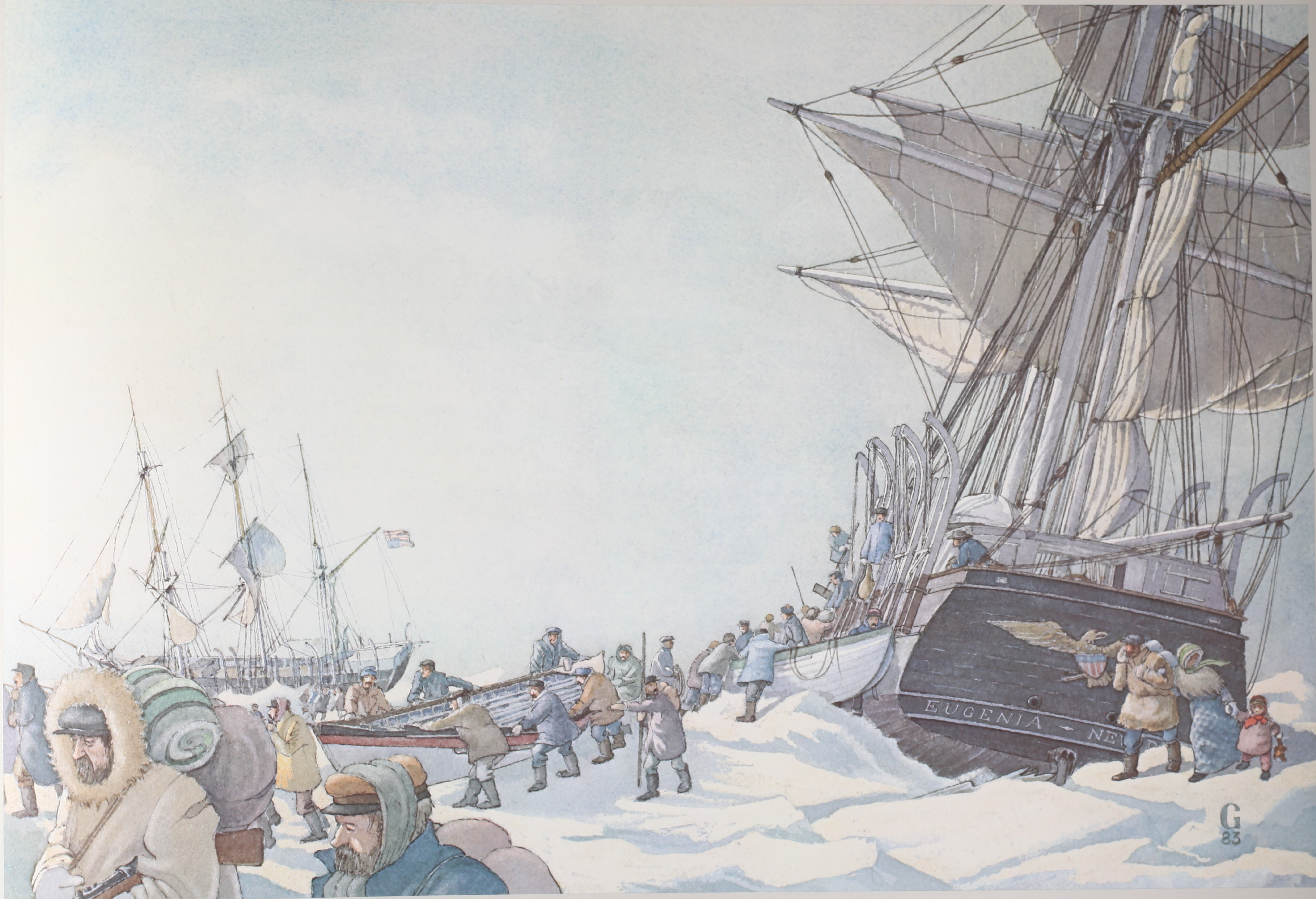
Eager to go to the ships, they pushed off into the wind after a short rest. Alternately beating under double reefed sails and rowing, they made their way inside the ice six or seven miles south of the Cape. At 3 P.M. they stopped to eat dinner on a large grounded floe.

They pushed off again, picking their way through broken ice, and ran into open water for the first time in more than a month. While they had moved south inside the ice they had been protected from the rough water that the strong wind was driving up, but once outside they took its full blast and the boats were violently tossed. Being heavily loaded with passengers and provisions, the boats were low in the water, and despite the raised gunwales, the crews had to bail constantly to keep themselves afloat. Cold and frightened and covered with a glaze of frozen spray, they fought their way out to the waiting ships that were themselves holding on straining anchor lines. The *Arctic* and the *Lagoda* both parted their chains as they rolled and bucked in the steep, rugged seas.

By the afternoon of the seventeenth the seven ships had taken aboard 1219 men, women, and children. The *Europa* carried 280; *Arctic*, 250; *Progress*, 221; *Lagoda*, 195; *Daniel Webster*, 113; *Midas*, 100; and *Chance*, 60. They were packed in shoulder to shoulder on the ships, "pushed together as bad as any Irish emigrants," wrote one. Aboard *Progress*, Captain Dowden turned his tiny cabin over to three captains and their families, and rough bunks were knocked together between decks for the sailors and boatsteerers. Captain Thomas W. Williams of the *Monticello* was aboard the *Progress* with his wife and two children. His young son, William F. Williams, recalled the tight conditions, noting where each group slept. On concluding his inventory, the only person he could not account for was Captain Dowden: "I never did know where he managed to sleep."

The seven ships headed south directly, most stopping to take on water in Plover Bay before bearing away for Honolulu, where they arrived before the end of October.

The news of the massive loss of ships and cargos and the evacuation of more than twelve hundred people without loss of life created a sensation. Out of forty vessels in the 1871 Arctic whaling fleet, only seven returned that autumn. The 1871 season had accounted for the loss of thirty-three ships, valued with outfits and cargos at more than $1,600,000. Twenty-two of these were from New Bedford and were valued well in excess of a million dollars.



The barks Eugenia and Julian abandoned in the Disaster of 1871

WILLIAM GILKERSON

VI *Helen Mar*

IN THE AUTUMN, a great triangular tongue of ice usually projects down into the center of the Chukchi Sea from the Arctic Ocean. On either side of this central tongue there is the band of clear water, kept ice-free by the warm northerly currents flowing up from Bering Strait. One branch of this current flows north over Herald Shoal, then past Herald Island and on into the Arctic Ocean; the other flows northeast along the coast of Alaska. This tongue is larger or smaller depending on the warmth of the summer, and it wags east or west depending on which way the wind forces it. The whalemen called the tongue's southern tip "Post Office Point" because it was there that whaleships cruising back and forth between Point Barrow and Herald Island often met and exchanged mail and information.

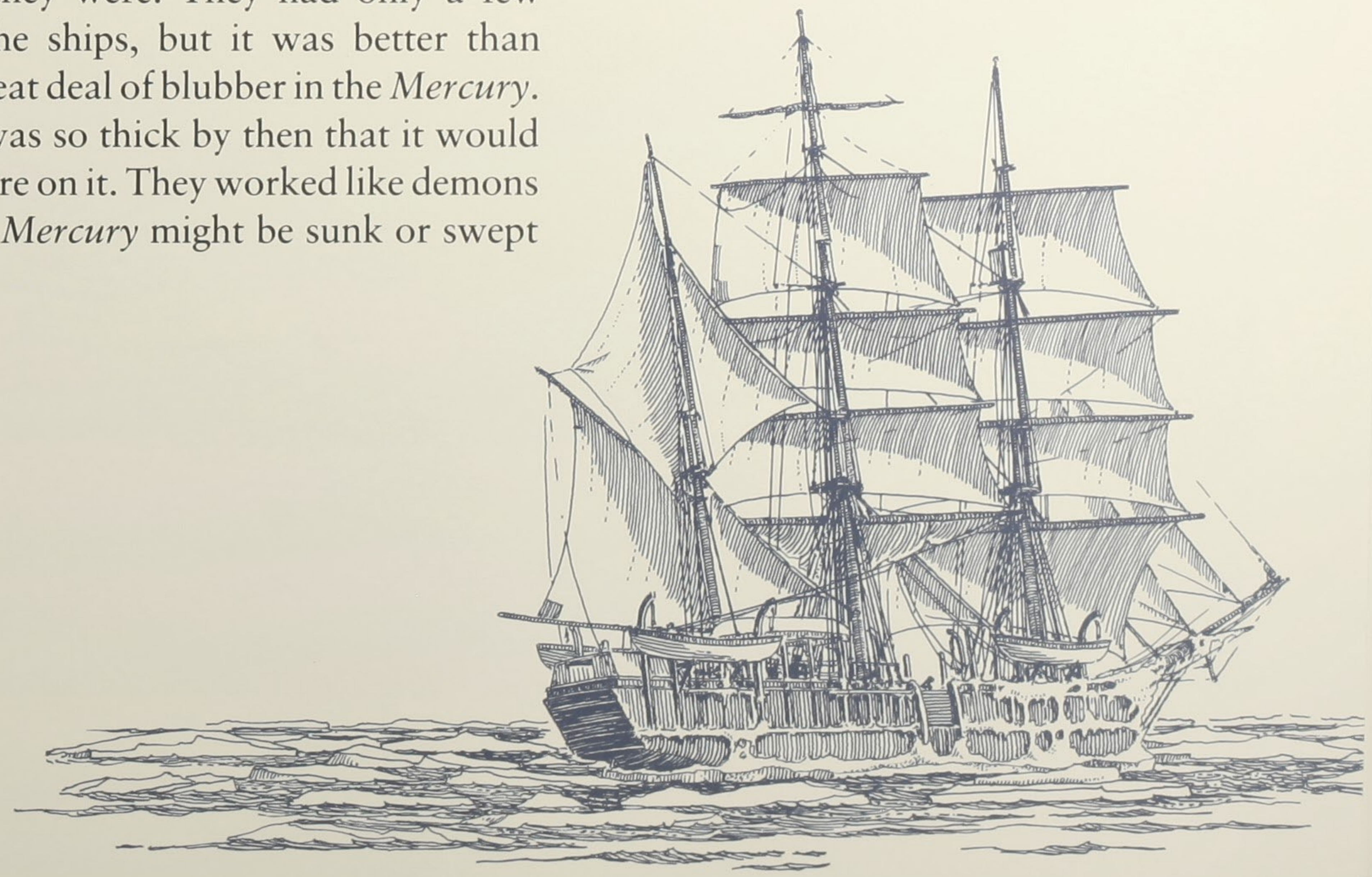
The fleet moved around Post Office Point in September 1879, hoping to make a good catch out of an otherwise unproductive cruise and to duplicate the catches made there the year before. In former years the ships had always left the Chukchi Sea by the end of September to avoid the advancing ice, violent gales, and increasing cold of late autumn. They knew that in September the tongue began to move southward and that the southeasterly current running along the north coast of the Chukchi Peninsula toward Bering Strait often brought with it large quantities of young ice. With strong north winds this ice could be forced right into the Strait itself, plugging it like a cork in a bottle.

Nevertheless, in 1879 many of the ships lingered near Herald Island well into October in deepening cold, searching for whales in waters which, in a period of calm and intense frost, could be covered by six inches of ice in twenty-four hours. One by one the ships bore away to the south until on October 16 only the *Mount Wollaston*, *Vigilant*, *Mercury*, and *Helen Mar* remained. For safety the *Mercury* and *Helen Mar* formed a pair, keeping an eye on one another, as did the other two. On the eighteenth Captain George Bauldry aboard the *Helen Mar* began preparations to go south. He was anxious to leave, for the nights were by then very long and very cold. He held up for a day, however, to let the *Mercury* finish cutting a whale.

The two stood south on the nineteenth, but, as they neared the Chukchi Peninsula, they found a vast field of young ice blocking their way. Assuming they could work around it, they steered northeast to prepare to come down to the Strait on the other side of the Sea. Two days later they reached Herald Shoal and then steered southeast toward Point Hope. At first they found a few scattered pieces of ice. Later these increased in number. Then young ice began to form between the pieces. Initially it was just a scum, but it gradually thickened and on the twenty-second it brought them to a halt. Simultaneously the northeasterly current began to carry them away from Bering Strait. Hoping the ice would wash past them, they dropped their anchors but they had been caught: the northern pack, the tongue, had met the western pack, and they were caught in the Arctic's maw.

Captains Bauldry and Hickmott knew that two ships together had a better chance of survival than one on her own. When the *Mercury* began to drag her anchors, they made her fast astern of the *Helen Mar*, using cutting falls to warp her in. Soon, however, it began to blow hard from the northeast. Overjoyed, they hove up their anchors to stand before the wind, hoping to break out of their prison. They found the *Mercury* could move only about two ships' lengths and the *Helen Mar* could not move at all.

One can imagine the terror the crews must have felt, isolated as they were so far from land. The night was calm and very cold, and the next morning the captains decided their only choice was to prepare to winter where they were. They had only a few months' provisions aboard the ships, but it was better than nothing; and they still had a great deal of blubber in the *Mercury*. They found that the new ice was so thick by then that it would support a sled with a ton or more on it. They worked like demons for two days, fearing that the *Mercury* might be sunk or swept



away from them. On the twenty-fourth they had most of the supplies transferred, and Captain Hickmott and his wife and young daughter moved aboard the *Helen Mar*.

The temperature dropped even further.

"I had never before imagined such cold as we now experienced," said Captain Bauldry. "We had a fire in the forecastle, two in the blubber room, and one in the cabin, yet every night frost an inch or more thick would form on the inside of the ship."

The next day, miraculously, the wind swung into the north and began to blow a gale, breaking up the ice. They cut themselves free of the *Mercury* and set all sail. With the spars and rigging straining, slowly the *Helen Mar* began to gather momentum. For two days they madly forced her ahead through the slush and the floes, moving at only a knot or two in the gale, pushing the ship to its limits and giving it a fearful battering. She was covered in ice, and possibly it was the ice sheathing that saved her from smashing in her bows or simply wearing the planks away.

Near Point Hope they finally broke out into clearer water, but almost at once a new gale, stronger than the first struck them. It was so cold that the frost smoke rising from the water made it impossible to see from the deck. Bauldry went to the foretop to direct her from there. The temperature dropped to 3° Fahrenheit, and the ice coating on the ship grew thicker. "We could only steer with the sails, as the rudder was held solid by ice," Bauldry remembered. "The stem was a mass of solid ice even to the catheads, and around the ship at the water's edge was a regular platform of ice, so that you could walk around the vessel."

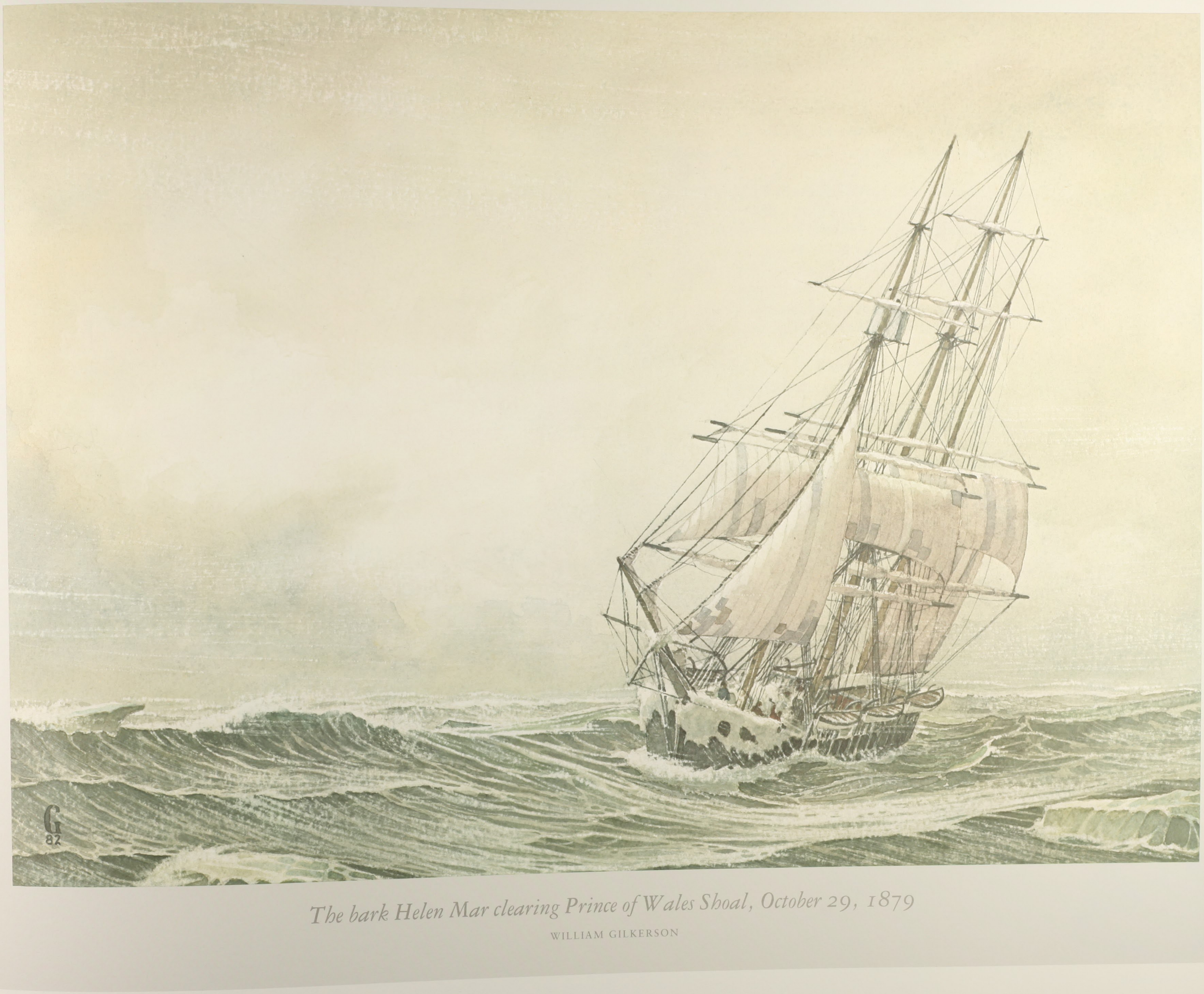
On the twenty-eighth they saw the Diomede Islands in the middle of Bering Strait twenty-five miles to the southwest, and, in apparent safety, they waited for a favorable wind to push through the Strait against the strong northerly current. Bauldry described their exhaustion:

No human being can imagine what we had gone through, or what anxiety of mind I suffered with all these lives dependent upon me. Neither the mate, Mr. Carter, or myself had had a bit of sleep for five nights or days, and I feared he would die, he was so nervous. To induce sleep, I gave him a large amount of laudanum, and he lay with both eyes wide open, yet in the deepest sleep. Had there been fifteen miles more of ice to go through, we certainly would have gone to the bottom. The ship could not have stood the strain. As it was, she was almost cut through on the bluff of both bows.

When the wind looked good for passing the Strait, Bauldry gave orders to begin beating south, and, at the limit of his endurance, fell into his bunk. Soon the ship entered a thick snow storm. Unknown to the men, the strong current began to set them toward the shallows that run north from Cape Prince of Wales for thirty miles. At 6 A.M. the ship struck hard on the shoal, ripping off her false keel and forefoot. Bauldry woke at the first shock, knowing what must have happened. He fought his way on deck as the crew raced around trying to lighten the ship, frantically throwing overboard everything they could get their hands on, while the *Helen Mar* pounded harder and harder. Fortunately, she began to list steeply, and Bauldry could see that at that angle she was drawing less. He ordered the crew to back her sails, and with the wind screaming around them they backed her off.

They passed through Bering Strait October 30, one of the latest passages a vessel made in the nineteenth century, and reached San Francisco November 26, a month after they had been given up for dead.

When they hauled out the worn and racked *Helen Mar* for inspection, they found that her bow timbers had been badly started and her bottom timbers shaken, her false keel, forefoot, sheathing, and copper had been torn off, and at one place in her bows the ice had cut through all but an eighth of an inch of her planks.



The bark Helen Mar clearing Prince of Wales Shoal, October 29, 1879

WILLIAM GILKERSON

VII Jim Vincent's Ordeal

ON MAY 5, 1885, the bark *Napoleon* lay hove to about fifty miles south of Cape Navarin in an ugly gale. For two days she had been battered by the wind and the ice, and when one of the men came on deck to report the ship half full of water, their worst fears were confirmed: they were aboard a stove and sinking ship, alone in the northern Bering Sea.

The men took to the boats at once, and fifteen minutes later watched the *Napoleon* roll over and sink. The crew made their way to the edge of the pack ice where they spent a wet and miserable night. At dawn they had to face the reality that to reach shore they would have to work through the fifty-mile-wide band of ice that lay between them and the land. They set out in four boats but soon were separated in the snow squalls. The captain's boat and another managed to stay together, and, four days after the *Napoleon* was lost, they were providentially found by the *Fleetwing*. Several had died, all were frostbitten.

The other two boats stayed together and became lost in the ice for four days, during which time they had no food. Eventually they shot two small seals and, eating them raw, gained a little strength, but men had already started to die. They soon found that the ice was too dense for them to reach the land, and, in despair, they drifted for twenty-six days until only nine were alive.

At last, through a break in the ice they saw natives on shore who beckoned them to land. James B. Vincent, one of the boatsteerers, was the only one who could walk when they reached shore, and five of the sailors died soon thereafter. Vincent found that they had landed near a twenty-mile fresh water lagoon. The family that had beckoned them ashore lent him a hook and line and taught him how to catch fish and how to split and dry them.

Sometime in July a group of twenty-five natives with reindeer and sledges appeared on the landward side of the lagoon. The fishermen went across in boats to visit and introduced Vincent to the headman of this Koryak family, Utourat, who at nearly seventy years of age stood straight and over six feet. Once he understood Vincent's story, he vowed to help him return to his people.

Vincent believed that the whalemen at sea would already have stopped searching for survivors of the *Napoleon*, presuming that none could still be alive. He joined Utourat's nomadic band in the hope of reaching a trading post to call for the rescue of his group. Because his mates were too ill to be moved, he left them in the care of the coastal natives. From Utourat he learned how to herd the reindeer and how to hunt, and he completely adopted the lifeways of the Koryaks as they moved with their herd through the mountains.

It was a difficult winter. Because snow blocked the passes, Vincent was unable to reach into the interior to visit a trading post. In March 1886 he returned to the coast with Utourat. He found his companions very weak, and shortly thereafter they died. Vincent then returned to the interior and came back to the coast again in the summer, hoping to find a ship searching for him.

To his utter disappointment he learned that he had missed by only hours the Russian steam trading brig *Siberia*, which had been looking for him. He was told that during the winter his companions, thinking he was heading for Plover Bay, sent a message along the coast mentioning only their names. He later learned that Captain Lincoln, hearing from the natives that three men had died, had assumed that there were no more survivors. The natives told him that Vincent was alive, but, not having heard his name before, the Captain assumed they were talking about venison.

In deep gloom Vincent prepared for another northern winter. Almost at once Utourat took sick, and as he sank toward death, he asked his wife and sons to take Vincent across the mountains to the trading post at Anadyr. In September they began to return to the mountains, and in January, Katikot, Utourat's son, orga-

James B. Vincent

nized a party of twelve sleds for the trip to the trading post.

They travelled 140 miles to Anadyr, and Vincent found that in contrast to the kind people with whom he was living, the half-breeds at Anadyr were indifferent to his plight. Fortunately he found a native trader there who was visiting from Cape Bering on the Chukchi Peninsula. Vincent carved his initials and other information on a piece of wood and gave it to the native, asking him to give it to one of the whaling captains who regularly stopped at Cape Bering on their way into the Arctic.

Katikot's party stayed at Anadyr for ten days and then returned south to its herds. After the calving season in April, Vincent left for the coast. When he reached the shore he immediately noticed a little native girl with some gingerbread cookies in her hand. To his intense depression he learned that the bark *Sea Breeze* had been becalmed there and had left only a few hours before. Sick at heart he prepared to spend the summer on the coast.

On June 8, 1887, the bark *Hunter* touched at Cape Bering to trade. An old native came aboard and approached Captain Barney Cogan, carefully unwrapping a small piece of wood. On it were crudely carved the following letters.

On the front:		On the back:
1887 J.B.V.	TOB	S.W.C. NAV
BK. NAP	BACO	M 10
	GIVE	HELP COME

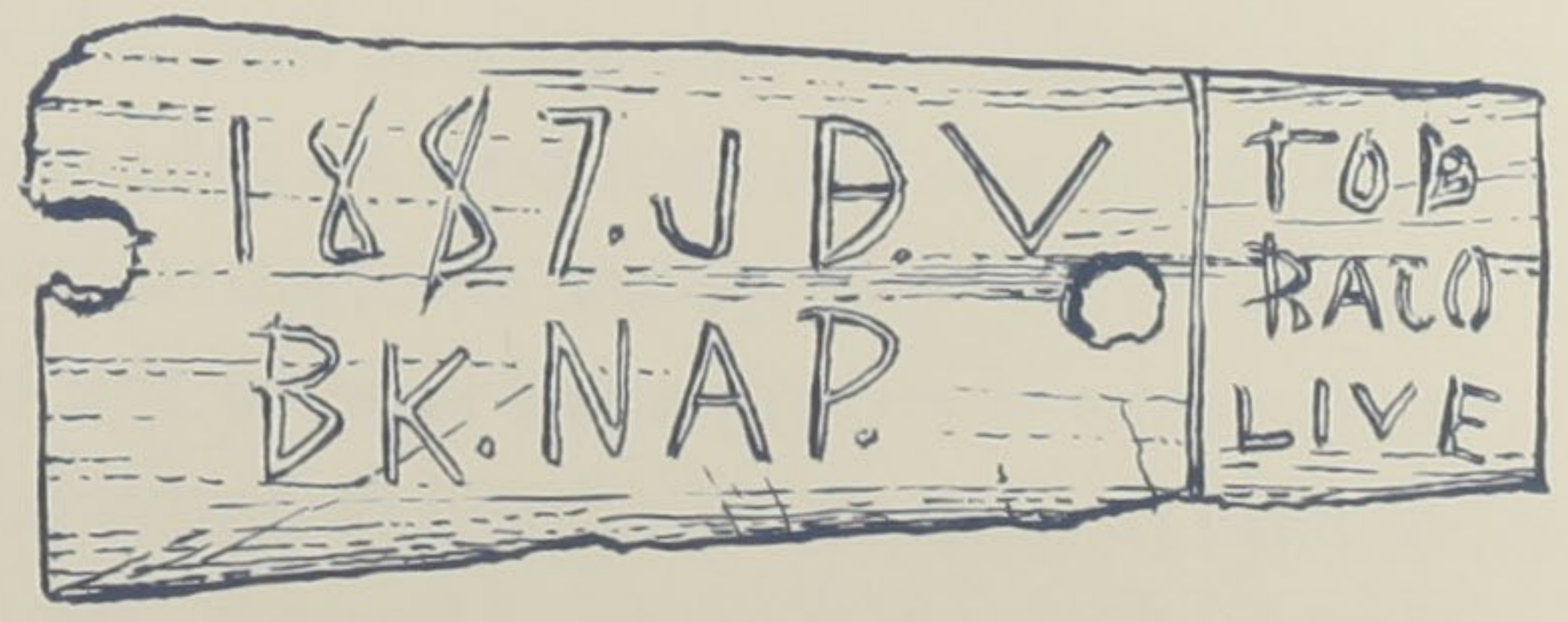
Cogan immediately concluded that it was a cry from a survivor of the *Napoleon*, that the survivor, J.B.V., was ten miles southwest of Cape Navarin, and that J.B.V. wanted the messenger given tobacco in return for his efforts.

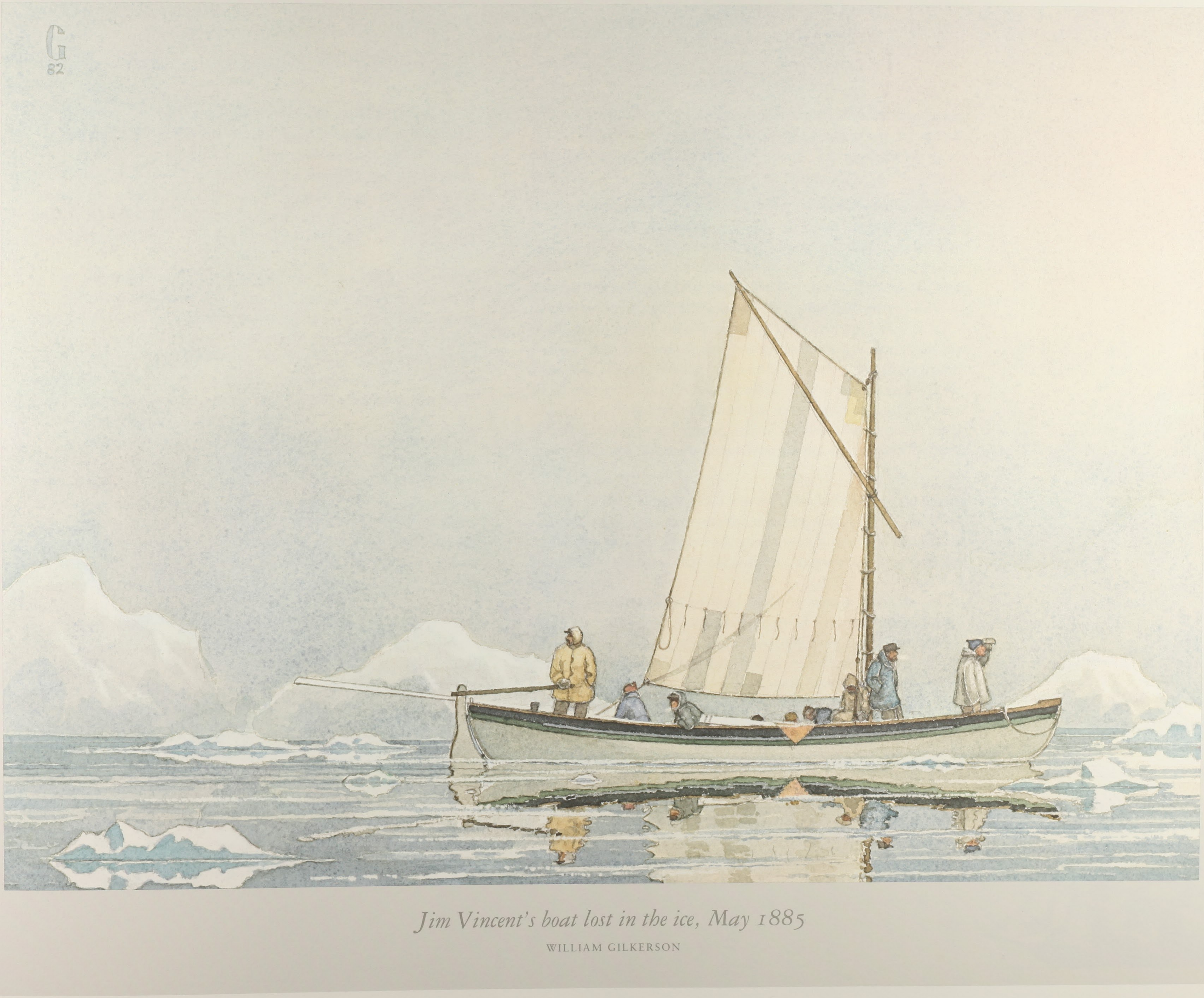
It would have been difficult for the *Hunter*, lacking auxiliary power, to return to Cape Navarin. Instead Cogan took the ship to Port Clarence, Alaska, where he knew that the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Bear* would be inspecting the whaling fleet for contraband. He arrived there at the end of the month and gave the chip to her captain, Michael A. Healy.

Healy paused long enough to take aboard Jake Rainbow, a native interpreter from the steam bark *Beluga*, then set off for Cape Navarin. He arrived there July 14 and after three days of close searching had worked his way forty-five miles along the coast.

On July 17th Vincent was fishing on the shore in a dense fog. All at once he thought he heard voices, and suddenly, right in front of him, the bow of a boat came out of the fog. A uniformed officer jumped ashore and said, "Good morning, Mr. Vincent."

Captain Healy immediately sent ashore to the natives two boat loads of trade goods: rifles, tobacco, molasses, flour, bread, and other items. That winter Congress authorized $1000 in gifts to be distributed among the natives that had helped Vincent. In 1890 Healy delivered to them 1000 yards of drilling, 500 yards of calico, 1000 packages of glover's needles, 8 dozen hand mirrors, 1500 pounds of ship's bread, 2 half barrels of sugar, 2 barrels of molasses, 1 chest of tea, 6 dozen combs, 5 dozen packages of linen thread, 4 dozen tin pails and pans, 1 dozen iron pots, 2 kegs of nails with hammers, files, gimlets, saws, braces, and other carpenter's tools, 1 dozen rifles, 6 shotguns, 125 pounds of gunpowder, 300 pounds of lead, 2 bags of shot, 20,000 caps, 1000 cartridges, axes, hatchets, butcher knives, 2 dozen fox traps, 4 dozen pipes, tobacco, snuff, 1 box of goggles, 1 package of fish hooks and lines, beads, and 1 box of children's toys.





Jim Vincent's boat lost in the ice, May 1885

WILLIAM GILKERSON

VIII Steam and Ice

IT WAS THE SCARCITY of whales that led to the age of steam whaling in the western Arctic. Faced with declining catches, William Lewis, a whaling merchant of New Bedford, realized that only auxiliary power would allow the ships to pursue the whales into the ice fields that were excluding the sailing vessels. He organized a group of investors for the first American-built and -registered steam whaler, the *Mary and Helen*.

The *Mary and Helen* was strongly built for coping with Arctic ice. With fine lines and bark rig, she was designed to conserve coal by using the wind on her passages to and from the Arctic, thus reserving her engine from times of calm or for moving among the ice floes. Only four to five tons of coal would be needed on days when the engine was in constant use. Smaller donkey engines were also provided for pumping ship, weighing anchor, and hoisting blubber.

The *Mary and Helen* was launched with high expectations in Bath, Maine, on July 30, 1879. Lewis and his partners immediately brought her to New Bedford for outfitting. With her try-works built and supplies and equipment aboard, she departed on September 9, bound for the Pacific under the command of Captain Martin Van Buren Millard. After a stormy passage through the Strait of Magellan, she reached Honolulu, where Captain Leander Owen joined her and took command for her Arctic cruise.

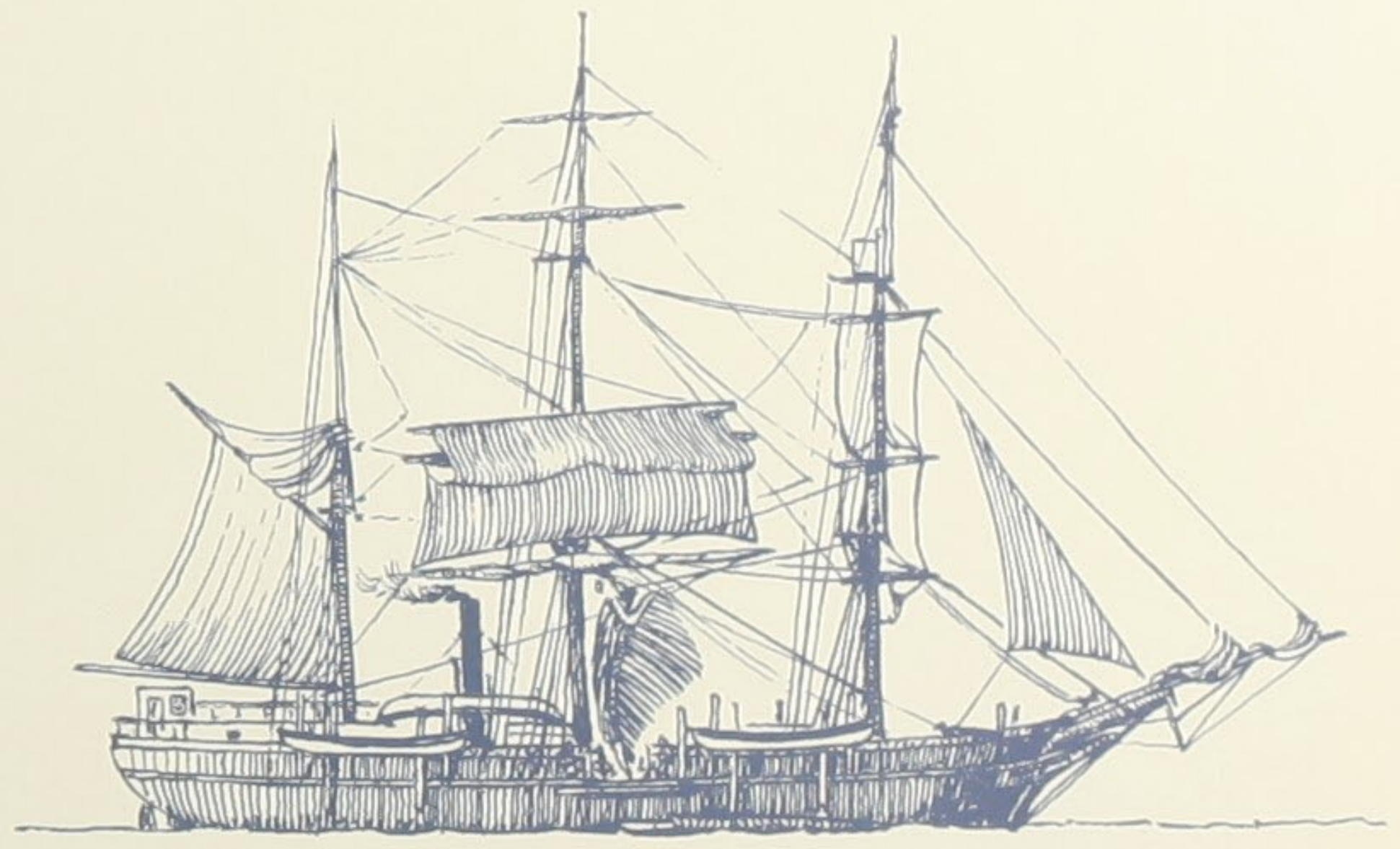
With an investment of $65,000 in the vessel, the *Mary and Helen*'s owners anxiously awaited news of their bold experiment. When it came, it was astonishing. The *Mary and Helen* arrived in San Francisco on October 10, 1880, with 2350 barrels of oil and 45,000 pounds of baleen, the product of twenty-seven bowheads and the largest catch in many years. With her cargo valued at more than $100,000, her investors were more than repaid after only one season's voyage. Captain Owen reported that the vessel's maneuverability in calms and adverse currents allowed him to stay in almost constant touch with the bowheads, far excelling the sailing whaleships. "We were, as whalemen say, blubber logged twice," reported Judson Cobb, one of her boatsteerers,

> *the first time, with twelve whales when we went and anchored off Point Franklin, boiled them out, stripped the [baleen] and stowed all below. Then we went off shore and found the whales, again filled up our blubber room and decks, and on September first we started out of the Arctic leaving plenty of whales in sight behind us, but could take no more. We came through the Behring Strait in a blinding snow storm and put into Plover Bay to finish boiling and stowing down preparatory to our start for San Francisco. Every cask we had was filled with oil; as there wasn't room enough below decks, we lashed 160 barrels on deck. As our coal was getting low, we put it all in one bunker and filled the other one with bone [baleen], and all the room between the top of the casks in the lower hold and between the decks was filled with bone too.*

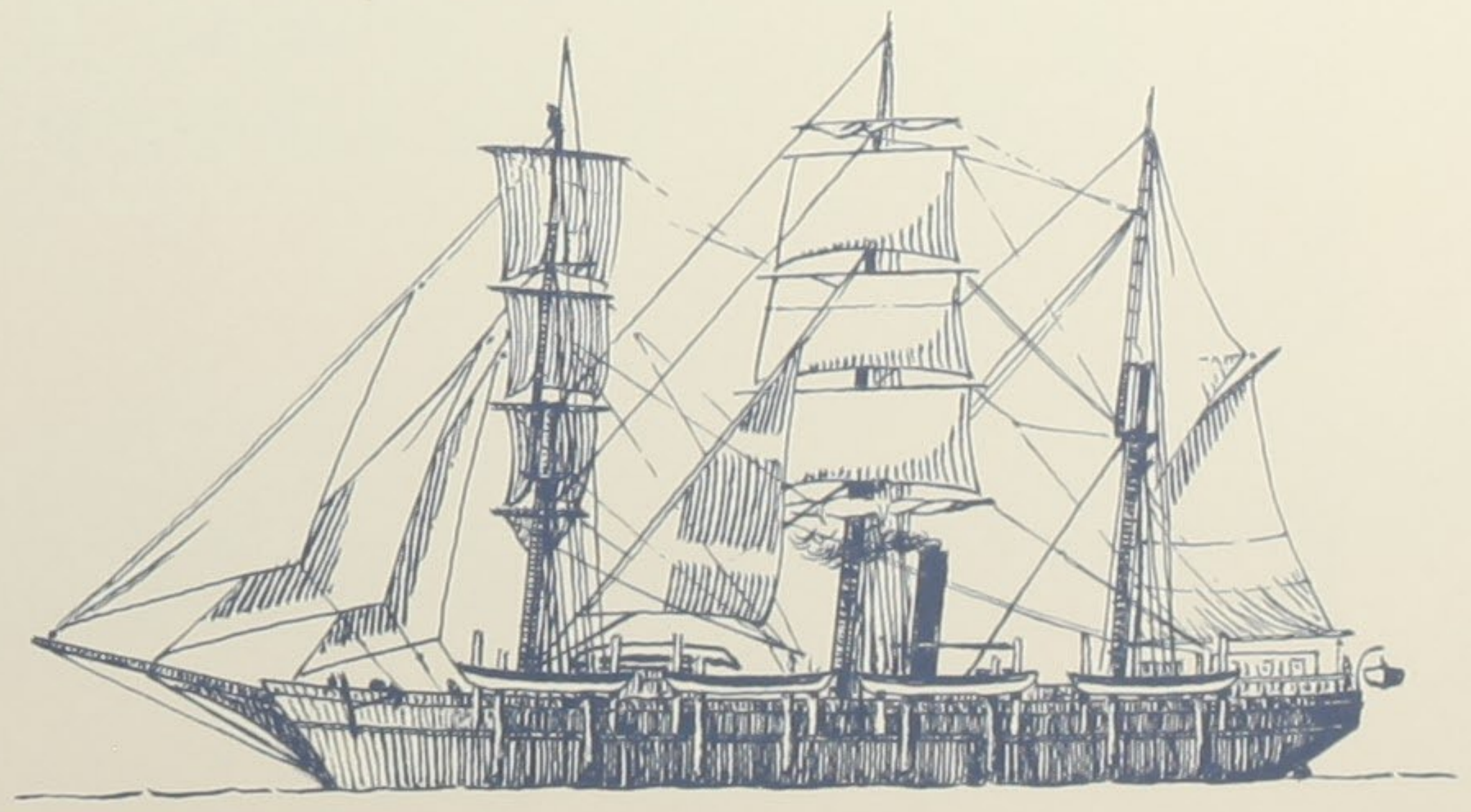
Despite the fact that 1880 was a particularly favorable season throughout the Arctic fleet, the amazing return from the *Mary and Helen* was quickly broadcast throughout the nation, and the lesson of her success was not lost on other enterprising whaling merchants.

Even before the *Mary and Helen*'s return, William Lewis confidently organized another group of investors to build his second steam whaler, the *Belvedere*. After the *Mary and Helen*'s arrival and spurred on by her success, he proceeded to construct a third steamer, the *North Star*, and arranged for the bark *Lucretia* to be converted to steam power. The *North Star* was launched in August 1881, and the *Lucretia* was ready for sea in the following month, both financed by the profitable sale of the *Mary and Helen* to the United States government in the spring of 1881. To replace her, he ordered the construction of the *Mary*

Mary and Helen [I]



Thrasher



Orca

and Helen (II).

With new ships launched or ordered, Lewis's fortunes began to change. Although the *Belvedere* returned from her maiden Arctic voyage with a profitable catch, the converted *Lucretia* proved to be a poor sailer. Storms prevented her from rounding Cape Horn and forced her to reach the Pacific by way of the Cape of Good Hope, too late to make the summer Arctic season. Even worse, the *North Star* was crushed in the ice at Point Barrow on her maiden voyage. This loss and the failure of the *Lucretia* to produce any income in 1882 compelled Lewis to sell the new *Mary and Helen* to his competitors, who took possession after she returned from her maiden Arctic voyage in 1883.

Entrepreneurs in San Francisco followed the fortunes of the first *Mary and Helen* with interest and were alive to the advantages of both steam power and San Francisco's proximity to the Arctic grounds. Early in 1881, Millen Griffith, the owner of a fleet of tugboats, George C. Perkins, a former governor of California, and Charles Goodall ordered the construction of the *Bowhead*, the first of the class of steam whalers to be built on the West Coast. At a cost of more than $100,000, the *Bowhead* was launched on April 18, 1881.

Like William Lewis before them, Griffith, Goodall, and Perkins—who would soon form the Pacific Steam Whaling Company—sensed the value of the new technology and laid the keel of a second steamer, the *Orca*, as soon as the *Bowhead* had been launched. The group, now enlarged to include Josiah N. Knowles, then built the *Narwhal* and *Balaena*, purchased the *Mary and Helen (II)* from Lewis, and ordered the construction of the *Thrasher* at Bath, probably because Dickie Brothers, the San Francisco builder of their other steamers, could not handle the volume of new work. Later they would buy the *Grampus*, *Jesse H. Freeman*, *Newport*, and *Mary D. Hume*.

With only the maiden voyage of the *Bowhead* behind them, the partners witnessed in 1883 the maiden voyages of the *Orca*, *Balaena*, and *Narwhal*, as well as the first voyage of the *Mary and Helen (II)* under their ownership—vessels valued at more than $500,000.

The Company's ships, like William Lewis's, were well built, with fine, clean lines for fast passages to and from the Arctic ground. But unlike Lewis's vessels, the Company's *Bowhead* and *Orca* were fitted with large two-bladed propellers from which the shafts could be withdrawn, allowing them to be hoisted in a sliding frame up into the vessel. A centerboard was then placed in the void to improve speed under sail. The *Orca*, *Thrasher*, *Narwhal*, and *Balaena* were also equipped with steam tryworks and iron oil tanks. The tryworks or "steam digesters" not only speeded the process of rendering oil from blubber but left the oil with a lighter color and less odor than that from blubber-fired tryworks. The oil could then be transferred directly to the iron holding tanks without first cooling it, as was necessary when using wooden casks. The tanks also allowed the ship's load to be trimmed while at sea by pumping oil from one tank to another. With these new methods of rendering and storing oil, the vessels of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company anticipated some of the equipment that was to characterize the factory ships of twentieth-century whaling. Contrary to the predictions of whalemen who believed the steamers too noisy and frightening to whales, these vessels consistently proved their value by tracking the increasingly elusive bowheads into difficult or dangerous locations.

The steam barkentine Newport among whales

WILLIAM GILKERSON

IX Herschel Island

THE *MARY D. HUME*'S discovery of the bowheads' summer feeding grounds in the eastern Beaufort Sea made Herschel Island the focal point of the industry for the next twenty years (1890–1910), the place where the whaleships could winter safely for ten months while waiting for the brief summer season. In these forbidding surroundings the whalemen developed unique methods for coping with the winter.

By the middle of September most of the ships intending to winter in the Arctic stayed close to Herschel in case of an early freeze. By then most of the bowheads had migrated west past the island. As the whaling tapered off, the ships used slow days to collect driftwood on the mainland, for the island's wood supply had long since been exhausted. Depending on the size of the ship and the energy of the captain, anywhere from 100 to 300 cords of wood would be gathered.

By the beginning of October all the ships were in Pauline Cove and ready for freeze-up. One last duty on shore remained: to secure sufficient dog feed. Usually a few whale carcasses had washed ashore near the island. The ships towed one or two of the carcasses to the outside of the sandspit, where, during the winter, the men could chop out great chunks of the meat for the dog teams that hauled wood, ice, and food.

The crew was often detailed ashore in the last days before freeze-up to cut sod blocks to cover the decks of the ships and to build a house for the ship's natives, who served as dog drivers and seamstresses. The house was usually constructed in the local Eskimo style: a simple, central-four-post construction with wall timbers leaning into it and walls and roof thickly covered with sod blocks. It was an extremely warm structure. At the same time other crewmen might be at work blasting and digging an ice cellar into the permanently frozen ground. Roofed over with logs and sod, the cellar would keep their meat frozen year round.

As young ice began to form in Pauline Cove, any heavy ice floes that had blown into the cove were towed out to clear the harbor before the ships positioned themselves for the winter. At this point everyone was back aboard ship because for a few days it would be impossible to reach the shore by boat through the thickening slush.

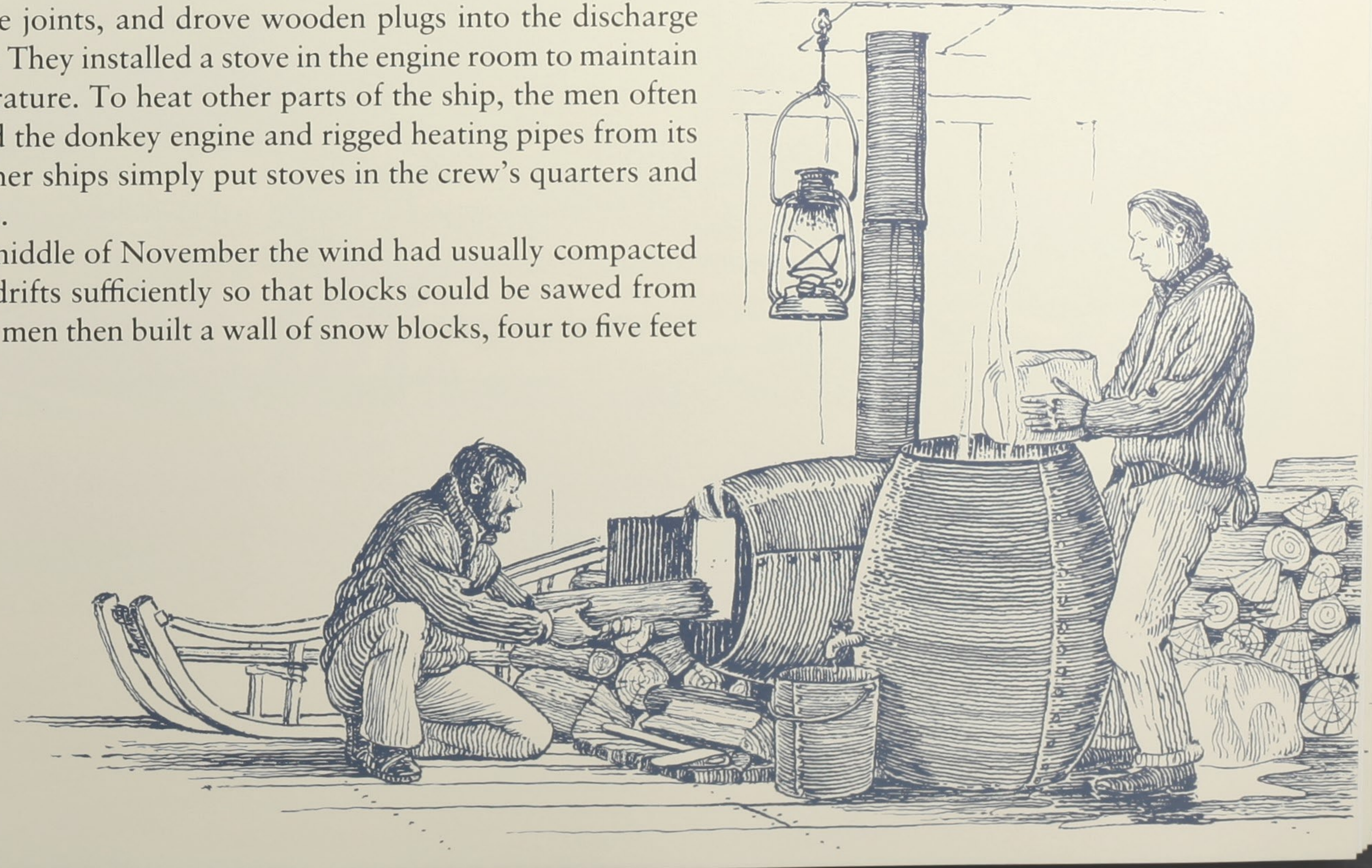
When the ice was a couple of inches thick, the ships hove up their anchors and drove southeast into the young ice. On the southeasterly axis they could minimize their surface exposure to the brutal northwesterlies of winter. Deeply fearing fire, the captains also took care to keep their vessels as well separated as possible and to keep a "fire hole" chopped open through the ice to provide quick access to water.

The ship itself had then to be further prepared for the winter. The men unbent several of the sails and sent down some of the yards. They placed the yards running fore and aft from the poop to the forecastle, then stretched the sails over them and battened them down. The main deck was thus completely enclosed, creating a large room called the "bull room," where the carpenter could work—building sleds, among other things. The room was heated by a wood stove made from a 100-gallon metal oil drum. Next to the stove was another drum for melting fresh water ice.

The men also chopped open a hole through the thickening ice around the rudder and propeller and cleared it daily to save the gear from being torn off should the ice move suddenly.

When the ice was judged strong enough, they blew down the boiler, drained the water from all pipes and joints, greased or painted the joints, and drove wooden plugs into the discharge pipe holes. They installed a stove in the engine room to maintain the temperature. To heat other parts of the ship, the men often dismantled the donkey engine and rigged heating pipes from its boiler. Other ships simply put stoves in the crew's quarters and after cabin.

By the middle of November the wind had usually compacted the snow drifts sufficiently so that blocks could be sawed from them. The men then built a wall of snow blocks, four to five feet



thick, completely around the ship, up to the main deck and around the after house. They also built a small house over the fire hole and rudder hole to retard the ice formation there. Even with this housing, four to six inches of ice would form on the water in twenty-four hours.

The men also had to attend to the ship's supply of drinking water. As soon as about six inches of ice had formed on Herschel Island's fresh water pond, which was several miles away from the anchorage at the top of the island, crews were sent there to saw out blocks. The blocks were stacked nearby. Each ship had its own cache, and it was one of the winter's chores to haul blocks of ice from the top of island to the sandspit, where they were placed on stages to keep them above the drifting snow and away from the dogs. The ice blocks could then be fed into the melting tank as needed. October, before the ice became too thick, was the easiest month to saw ice, but ice cutting went on all winter—the crew of a steam bark used four tons per week.

As the days shortened the cold grew sharper. On November 29 the sun rose only briefly at noon over the jagged outline of the Buckland Mountains, then sank for good, not to be seen again for more than six weeks. By then the men had completed their preparations for winter and could pause to consider their surroundings.

They lay more than 200 miles above the Arctic Circle and 400 miles east of Point Barrow. Their little island was only a mile from the mainland, and extended only about eight miles on its longest axis. Their view was framed on the north and west by the gentle slope of the island. To the south were the mountains. Everywhere else was the vast whiteness of the Polar Sea. And dominating all was the wind.

The whalemen quickly learned that Herschel is a windy place. It blows a gale an average of four times a month. Coupled with temperatures averaging around −20° Fahrenheit during much of the winter, the cold can be severe. Occasionally it has fallen to −50°. The "rule of thirty," an Arctic adage, has it that at thirty below zero, with thirty miles per hour of wind, exposed flesh will freeze in thirty seconds.

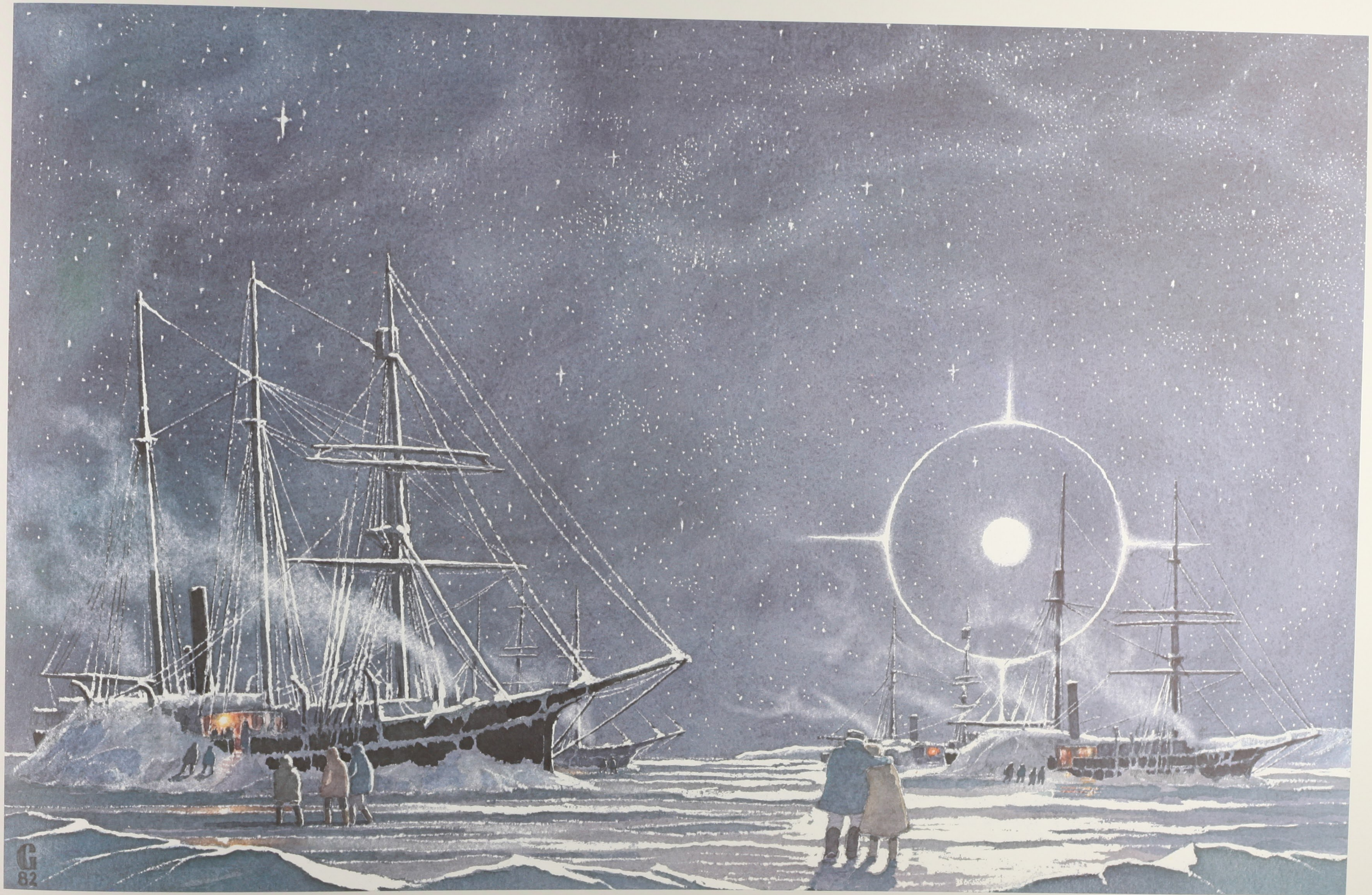
Despite the cold and the isolation, there was a pleasant side to life at Herschel. Seven ships wintered in Pauline Cove in 1893–1894, fifteen in 1894–1895, and thirteen in 1895–1896. With so much time on their hands, the captains tried to keep themselves and their crews happy and busy. In desolate surroundings they tried to make life as much like home as possible, for "It seemed rather strange," Captain John McInnis wrote, "to think how many times I had [gone] overboard to hook on to sperm whales and last night came walking out of the waist on a pair of ice steps."

The men sledded and skied in the small ravine on the north side of the harbor. Sometimes as many as a hundred people could be seen on the hill. At first the sailors were shaky on their skis, and one reported that he "capsized" regularly on his runs. A few teeth were loosened in sledding accidents.

Their sport soon became more organized. In 1892, as soon as the ice was thick enough in the cove, the men put up goal posts and laid the perimeter of a field that doubled for soccer and football. Throughout the winter the crews of all the ships played there—even at −25°. On bad days they occasionally held boxing matches on the main decks of the ships.

On February 19, 1894, the men played what one captain considered to be the first baseball game north of the Arctic Circle. The boatsteerers beat the officers by one run. The game was considered such a success that four teams were immediately formed: the Herschels, Arctics, Northern Lights, and Pick-ups. The captains of the four teams met on March 5 to form a league and to draw up the rules and regulations. A diamond was laid out using ashes to mark the lines and bases and a ship's sail for the back stop.

During the spring the teams entertained one another socially.



Steam whalers Newport, Balaena, Karluk and Jeanette wintering at Herschel Island, 1895

WILLIAM GILKERSON

On April 9, 1894, for instance, the Herschels gave a supper for the other clubs. "The bill of fare: ham sandwiches, popcorn, ice cream, and hop beer."

BASEBALL AT HERSCHEL could also be dangerous. On Saturday afternoon, March 7, 1897, the men from three ships were in the midst of a game in beautiful weather, unseasonably warm at 20°. Shortly after 1:30 P.M., in the bottom of the second inning, suddenly a dark billowing cloud loomed over the island to the southwest. Within minutes it was blowing the worst gale some of the men could remember. They ran for the ships. Almost at once they could see only a few feet and the temperature plunged toward −20°. Scrambling and unable to see their way, the men simply ran to the first ship or building they found, staying all night while the wind shrieked around them.

At 8:00 the next morning the wind stopped as suddenly as it had started. The ships' crews quickly fanned out and found five frozen corpses, three whalemen and two Eskimos. One native was found on the sandspit, only one hundred yards from his house.

Some captains brought their families with them. They had to pay the owners $1000 for this privilege but it made their lives—and the lives of others at Pauline Cove—far more pleasant. The winter of 1894–1895 was the first with women and children wintering with the fleet. Aboard the *Jesse H. Freeman* Captain W. P. S. Porter had his attractive wife, Sophie, and daughter, Dorothy. Mrs. John A. Cook was aboard the *Navarch*; Mrs. Charles E. Weeks on the *Thrasher*; Mrs. Albert Sherman and her son, Bertie, on the *Beluga*; and Mrs. F. M. Green and her niece, Lucy McGuire, on the *Alexander*.

The presence of women and children softened the hard edge of life that grows among men in isolation. At once the women began organizing parties, using every conceivable excuse for celebrations to leaven the gloom of winter: small card parties, elaborate dinners, birthday parties, dances—as well as the celebration of Washington's Birthday, Leap Year Day, Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving, the Fourth of July, St. Patrick's Day, Christmas, New Year's Day, and so on.

The men responded energetically by joining minstrel and theatrical groups. The "Herschel Island Snow Flakes" and "Fry's Theatrical Company" were groups that performed regularly on the large main deck of the *Beluga*. For these performances whaleman-artist John Bertonccini was persuaded to paint the back drops. The captains hung swings from the ships' bowsprits for the children. The women added an exotic aspect to the formerly all-male sport of skiing by appearing on the slope dressed in native costume with trousers "cut with legs quite loose and very full aft," as Captain McInnis noted.

The dances and dinners were often elaborate and dressy—on January 15, 1896, Captain George Leavitt wrote in his journal, ". . . the first time I have had a boiled shirt on for thirty-three months." But with only five wives among the fleet, dance partners were scarce. Captain McInnis reported that at Captain Weeks's birthday party, "For a partner in the Virginia Reel I had Miss Dorothy Porter, aged 5 years."

Those masters who were accompanied by their wives soon became known as "The Four Hundred"; those without them organized themselves into "the Hoodlums" and "Dry Throats." Although the groups entertained one another, a certain amount of badinage was passed between them. The Hoodlums, for instance, gave a party aboard the *Karluk* and invited Captain Joseph Whiteside and his young wife, among others. Captain and Mrs. Whiteside were considered extremely stingy not to have shared their abundant supplies of fresh pork with the others. For this reason the Hoodlums, among them Hartson Bodfish, stole half of one of the Whiteside hogs and served it to them without their knowledge. After dessert they read this dog-

gerel, written by Sophie Porter:

This little pig went to market on the good ship Belvedere
Until he came to the Arctic, where he ended his career.
Of a roving disposition, even while he was pork
He got into a sack one night and thought he would take a walk
He wandered among the ships,
And thought he would have some fun
Until he came to the Karluk,
And then his days were done.

Certainly one of the happiest events of those years took place on May 8, 1895, when Mrs. Albert Sherman gave birth to a 7½-pound girl, Helen Herschel. One of the saddest was on March 29, 1895, when Captain Charles Weeks was killed by a fall down the main hatch of the *Thrasher*. His body was frozen and then in the spring salted, and taken by his wife to San Francisco.

In the lengthening days of April, the men began to turn to the tasks of preparing the ship for the summer whaling cruise. First they removed the snow banking from the ship, then sawed a trench around the hull through the six-foot-thick ice. They did this because sometime in early May the ship, lightened of the winter's supplies, would usually "jump"—rise a foot or more. Unless it was allowed to jump evenly it would list, making life aboard unnecessarily uncomfortable.

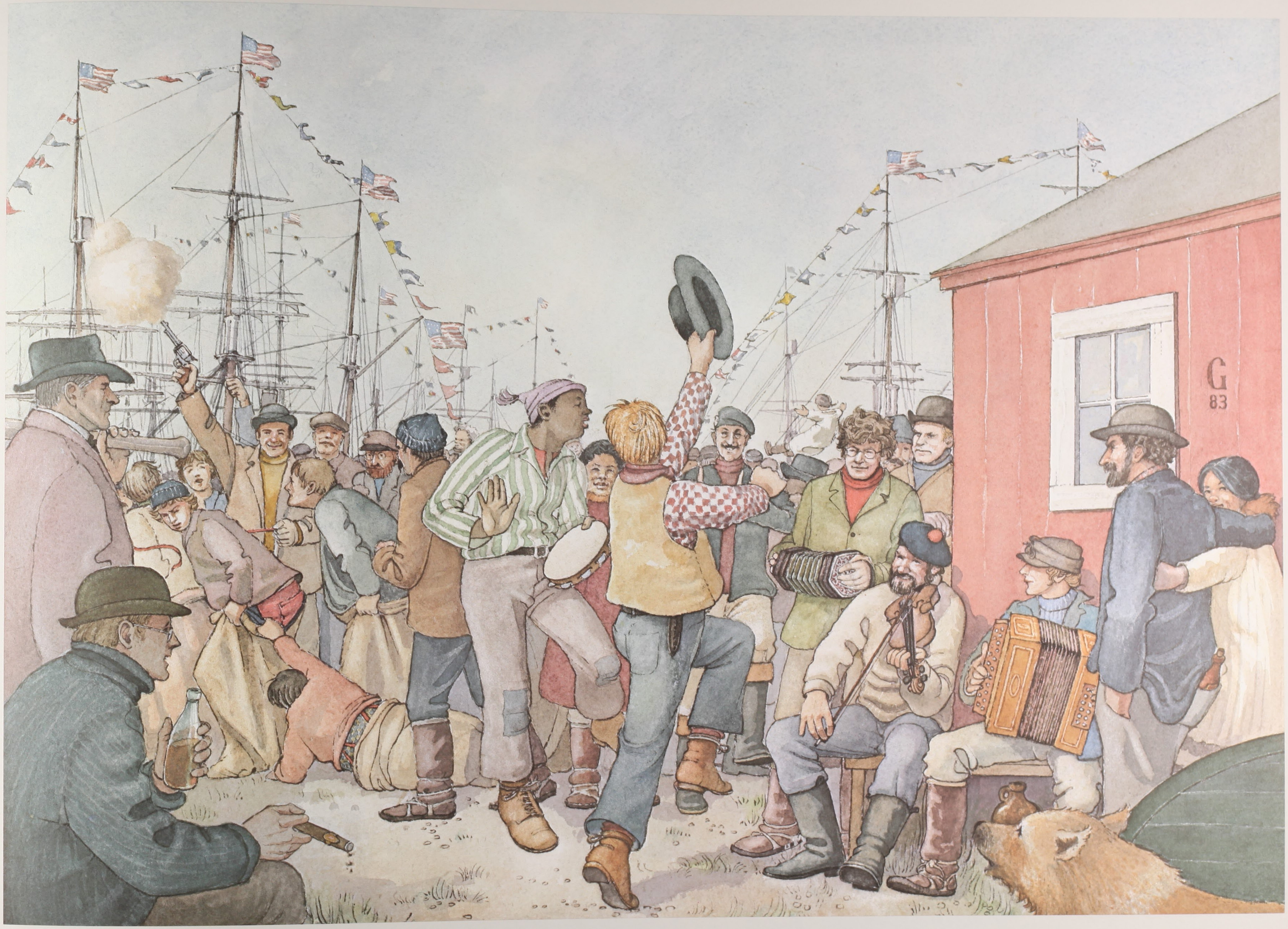
Next they removed the housing from the decks and sledded coal out to the ship to fill its bunkers. Coffer dams had to be put over the stern of the ship and pumped dry to allow the men to inspect the propeller blades and shaft gland.

At times the whalemen had to devise ingenious methods to carry out repairs so far from home. In 1895 the *Newport* twisted its propeller blades so badly that the coffer dams were useless. In San Francisco the ship would have been hauled out on a marine railway, but at Herschel the men had to work things out for themselves. With spars they rigged a huge pair of shears on the ice over the *Newport*'s stern. Then they hooked on three or four cutting falls to the stern. After leading the lines both to their winch and to the winch on the ship next to them, they were able to get the *Newport*'s stern high enough out of the water to change the propeller.

During the spring each crew scraped the masts and hull, painted them, tarred the rigging, painted the boats, set up the cutting falls, painted the interior of the ship, scraped last season's whalebone, dried the sails, rigged the boats and put them onto the cranes, sent the crow's nest aloft, overhauled the darting guns and bombs, checked the main engine and the donkey engine and the steam tryworks and the launch's engine, shackled on their anchor cables, and put an anchor through the ice. In the middle of June the ice began to break up in the cove, and at the beginning of July the ships were ready for sea.

The celebration of the Fourth of July concluded the events of winter. The men dressed the ships with all their flags, and at 8:00 A.M. they fired a salute to begin a day of games and contests: tug-of-war, jumping, foot races, wheelbarrow races, sack races, tub races, three-legged races, obstacle races, a whaleboat race, of course a baseball game, and shooting contests for whalemen, Eskimo men, and "squaws." In 1895 $300 in prizes were divided among the two or three leaders of the contests.

The ships were usually able to buck their way out of the harbor and into clearer water by July 10. Having spent ten months in the ice, they then started on their eight-week whaling cruise.



The Fourth of July celebrated at Herschel Island, 1895

WILLIAM GILKERSON

X Brower's Drift

THE LOSS OF THE STEAM BARK *Navarch* in August 1897 foreshadowed the wrecks of September. In July 1897 the nineteen vessels of the whaling fleet had worked their way north through Bering Strait and as far as Icy Cape, following the melting ice. This part of the passage was routine, but when the ships reached Icy Cape in late July, the whalemen's relative nonchalance disappeared. Before them lay the vicious spur of Blossom Shoals, and beyond the Shoals lay the 150-mile gantlet of water between the land and the pack ice where sixty ships had been lost since the beginning of the fishery.

The men aboard the *Navarch* did not have to be reminded of the dangers ahead of them, for the history of the Arctic fishery was, of course, well known to the captains and officers. In the 1870s the whalemen had grown bold and challenged the ice pack imprudently; the disastrous lessons they had learned were in everyone's mind. Captain Michael A. Healy accurately summarized, in 1884, the nature of pack ice:

> *There is in this [pack ice] that which man can never conquer. Inside its solid front no vessel can penetrate and once caught within its grasp it is almost a miracle that she ever escapes. No ship can be built that will stand its crushing force, and no ram can be made so powerful as to break its way through it. It is only when the elements combine against it that man can invade its domain.*

In late July or early August the ice seldom retreats many miles from the coast of northwestern Alaska: not more than ten to twenty miles from Point Franklin and about twice that distance from Icy Cape. Later in the season, under continuous pressure from currents and southerly or easterly winds, it may move as far as one hundred miles from Point Barrow. In 1897, however, the ice was heavier than usual, the margin narrower. In late July ten days of light northerlies had forced many small pieces of ice from the edge of the pack, driving them toward shore. The *Navarch*, in advance of the fleet, was moored to the shore-fast, grounded ice, about twenty miles beyond the Cape, and there, for more than a week, the ice slowly packed in around her.

On July 27, she was boarded by Charles Brower, manager of a whaling and trading station at Point Barrow and a fifteen-year resident of northwestern Alaska. Brower was alarmed at the *Navarch*'s vulnerable anchorage. Captain Joseph Whiteside, fifty-eight years old, had taken the *Navarch* past Icy Cape and into a dangerously exposed position, apparently because Whiteside's new, twenty-year-old wife, a former New Bedford shop girl, was thoroughly disliked by Mrs. McGregor, the middle-aged wife of the captain of the steam brig *Karluk*—and the enmity was mutual: the two could not stand being near one another. Consequently, when the *Karluk* reached the *Navarch*'s anchorage south of Icy Cape, Captain Whiteside moved on to avoid a marital squabble.

Brower had travelled down the coast from Point Barrow in the narrow leads by boat and had observed with considerable concern the ice conditions along the way. Once aboard the *Navarch* he viewed the compacting ice with alarm:

> *The morning of the twenty-eighth the ice came all around the ship; instead of coming back south, we took the anchor, tying to a large field of apparently grounded [ice]. While there, the smaller drifting ice came in, completely surrounding the ship. The first thing we knew, the piece we were tied to started drifting; even then we might have, by hard work, pushed our way out from the*

ice. Instead we just drifted, the ice coming more inside of us all the while, until we were fairly adrift in the pack with no chance to move.

While the rest of the fleet lay in comparative safety to the south near Icy Cape, the *Navarch*, with Brower aboard, was swiftly carried northeastward, even farther from shore. By August 3, she had been carried about twenty-five miles northwest of Point Belcher. Seeing that their situation was perilous, with little chance of escape for the ship, Captain Whiteside decided to abandon her and to attempt to reach the shore by crossing the moving ice floes with whaleboats. Brower, a veteran of shore whaling operations and well acquainted with the rigors of hauling whaleboats over the broken and piled floes, was under no illusions about the difficulty of the task nor about the fragility of the boats. He counselled Whiteside both to add a four-inch false keel to the boats to protect their thin cedar planks from the ice and to carry canvas for quick repairs. Ignoring this advice, Whiteside added only one inch to the keels and decided to take no canvas.

The *Navarch* was abandoned on August 3 by all but the eight of the crew who decided to take their chances by remaining with the ship. The larger party, including Mrs. Whiteside, made slow progress dragging their three boats to the southeast, against the direction of the drift. The crew reached heavier ice the next day and was soon exhausted. Two of the boats, now badly broken, were abandoned. Later, when the crew reached the edge of the pack, the third boat was launched, against Brower's advice, in dangerously milling ice. It too was wrecked, and the party had no choice but to return to the ship, by then ten miles away across difficult ice. According to Brower, Captain Whiteside broke down and began to drink heavily from a flask, declaring that it was everyone for himself or—including his wife—herself.

The group finally regained the ship five days after abandoning it. Brower knew there was no time to lose before starting out again. The other ships were unaware of the predicament of the *Navarch*, which by this time had drifted to Point Barrow. Once past the Point, he knew that the strong alongshore current forked, with one branch swinging northwest into the Arctic Ocean, the other turning east into the Beaufort Sea. Their only real hope of safety lay in reaching land before they were swept past the Point, "for beyond that no ship had ever drifted and returned except the *Young Phoenix*, and she was frozen fast in the ice."

Brower quickly began building a light canvas boat along the lines of an umiak. His experience in hauling boats over the ice to the lead edge for spring whaling had taught him to prefer the umiak, with its driftwood frame and sealskin covering, a lighter and more resilient craft than the heavy, fragile whaleboat. His boat, made with a hickory frame and oiled canvas covering, was large enough to hold ten men and light enough to be carried by two.

The group started out again on August 10. Brower agreed to go ahead, breaking trail for the others, with the Captain and his wife following with the boat. Late in the afternoon the vanguard reached the edge of the pack, only six miles from shore and a few miles south of the Point. They could see the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Bear* and the steam bark *William Baylies* at anchor inshore. When the men straggled up to Brower, he asked where the Captain and the boat were. The last arrival told him that Whiteside had taken the boat, compass, food, and ammunition back to the ship.

We were in a fix, trying every way we could think of to make the ships see us, to no use. In an hour it shut in foggy; then we did not know which way to turn. The ice was drifting fast to the north. The nearer we came abreast of the point, the faster we travelled. Then, the piece we were on separated from the pack, and we were marooned. Everyone was hungry; no one had anything to eat. . . . Not more than two besides myself had taken spare boots with them.

Brower realized that the only hope for the party of thirty-two men was to move into the current of ice flowing east around Point Barrow into the Beaufort Sea. To do so, he knew that they must leave the solid ice and reach the smaller drifting pieces of young ice, farther out at the pack's edge. Once in the Beaufort Sea there was a chance, a small chance, that they would be sighted by a whaler.

THE MEN HAD TO TRAVEL QUICKLY, and the ice was heavy and rough. The only food they had was the few pieces of hardtack that Brower had stuffed into one of his spare boots. They rested frequently, but the ice was too wet to allow sleep. On the second day out, the first man died, shooting himself. A day later, two more dropped dead; on August 13 the chief engineer died, and two of the firemen stayed behind with him. The survivors, without food or sleep, became increasingly weak. During the next two days, six more men perished. Later, others fell back until only sixteen remained. Brower kept the remnant walking south as fast as possible, knowing that every day the summer pack ice retreated farther from the coast and lessened their chances of being spotted by a passing ship.

Eight days after leaving the ship, the party reached the edge of the pack somewhere east of Point Barrow. Although most of the men wanted to wait there on relatively solid ice in hopes of being spotted by the ships, Brower persuaded them to join him on a small piece which might be blown to shore. He clinched the argument by pointing out that they might just as well die on a small piece of ice as on a larger one. Boarding a cake only twenty yards square, they drifted southeast for four days, until they were within two miles of Cape Halkett, about one hundred miles east of Point Barrow. Here, on the twelfth day of their ordeal they saw the steam bark *Thrasher* coming toward them alongshore. A Siberian Eskimo at the *Thrasher*'s masthead thought he saw a group of walrus on the ice and, knowing that walrus were rare east of Point Barrow, called the attention of the officers on deck to the curiosity. They turned their glasses on the small party, and soon Brower and his men were rescued.

Sixteen of thirty-two survived the march; eight of them were unconscious when rescued. Despite the cowardice of Captain Whiteside, Brower managed to save the lives of fifteen men. Whiteside, Brower learned, had reached Cooper's Island near Point Barrow after little more than a day's travel with the umiak. Brower's march and drift surely rank with mankind's most punishing tests of survival; his journey over rough and moving sea ice with little sleep and only ice and boot soles for food, and without assurance of rescue at the end, is testimony to a man of iron will and body.

While the *Navarch* fell victim to the ice, the rest of the fleet, proceeding more cautiously and safely, rounded Point Barrow without difficulty and reached the whaling grounds near Herschel Island. The whaling season of 1897 was, however, only moderately successful. By August 20 several of the vessels that reached Herschel earlier in the season or had wintered near there began to work their way west along the north coast of Alaska, following the bowheads as they migrated to their autumn feeding grounds in the western Chukchi Sea. On August 27, near Cape Halkett, the steam barks *Belvedere*, *Orca*, and *Jesse H. Freeman* found thickly scattered ice only a mile from shore. By September 2, having covered only half the distance to Point Barrow, they found the ice hard on the land. Slowly working their way west during the next two days, they were able to get within ten miles of the Point, where they were joined by the steam bark *Alexander* and schooner *Rosario*, also from Herschel.

One can only speculate whether or not at the end of August the captains of these vessels sensed their impending predicament. Until 1897, the general rule was that steamers could safely pass Point Barrow as late as September 10. In fact, the *Orca* had rounded the Point as late as September 20, 1888, and most of the steamers were capable of forcing their way through as much as five inches of young, forming ice. But no doubt some of the captains recalled the only real rule of Arctic ice pilotage: that the movements of the ice were unpredictable. Certainly all of them must have hoped for a south or east wind. Either of these winds would have improved their situation.

However, a stiff westerly wind sprang up on September 6, the day the ships got to Point Barrow. By midnight it reached gale force and brought the ice down on the Point and within a half mile of shore elsewhere. During the next three days light winds allowed the pack to ease slightly, and the ships were able to sneak around to the west side of the Point, but they could go no farther. Anxiety increased as word came from the east that the Pacific Steam Whaling Company's four-masted steam schooner *Jeanie* was three days overdue on her return from the company's base at Herschel Island.

The dirty weather of the Arctic autumn was upon them. On September 10, the wind shifted into the north, lowering the temperature and forming ice in the patches of open water. Jim Allen, an engineer aboard the *Jesse H. Freeman*, claimed that the *Orca*, *Belvedere*, and *Freeman* wasted several crucial days anchored at Point Barrow while the captains caroused together. By contrast, Captain Benjamin Tilton worked the *Alexander* close inshore on the west side of the Point, getting inside a long ridge of grounded ice, the remnant of the massive winter pressure ridge that is often found parallel to shore there. Protected by it, Tilton quickly unloaded a year's supplies at Brower's whaling station, then left hurriedly, ramming his way ahead and breaking through the ridge as soon as the ice outside slacked off slightly. The *Alexander*'s engineer described the fight to reach open water:

> *For eighteen hours it was "full speed astern," then "stop her" and then "full speed ahead," followed by the crash as we struck the icefield. Back and forth we went and every succeeding crash seemed to us down in the engine-room as though it would be our last. It did not seem possible that wood and iron could stand the*

The survivors of Navarch in Brower's party rescued by Thrasher, August 22, 1897

WILLIAM GILKERSON

strain much longer. After getting through the pack we had to fight our way through . . . miles of young ice an inch and a half thick. I can tell you when we reached [the] Sea Horse Islands and saw open water before us we were a happy set of men.

THE *ALEXANDER* was the last vessel to leave the Arctic from Point Barrow that year. That the other ships did not attempt to break out with her is puzzling. One observer wrote, "I suppose they think the ice will go off from the shore, and they can get out without bucking."

Whatever the opportunity for escape, it was fast slipping by. The *Orca*, *Jesse H. Freeman*, *Belvedere*, and *Rosario* were anchored in a small patch of open water southwest of the Point, hemmed in on the east by the land, on the south by the pressure ridge, and on the north and west by the pack. Young ice was forming quickly. The captains, now fully aware of the danger of their situations, faced every prospect of being forced to winter on an exposed coast. The ice would almost surely destroy the vessels, as it had in 1871 and 1876, and none had sufficient supplies to feed his crew for the next ten months until breakup.

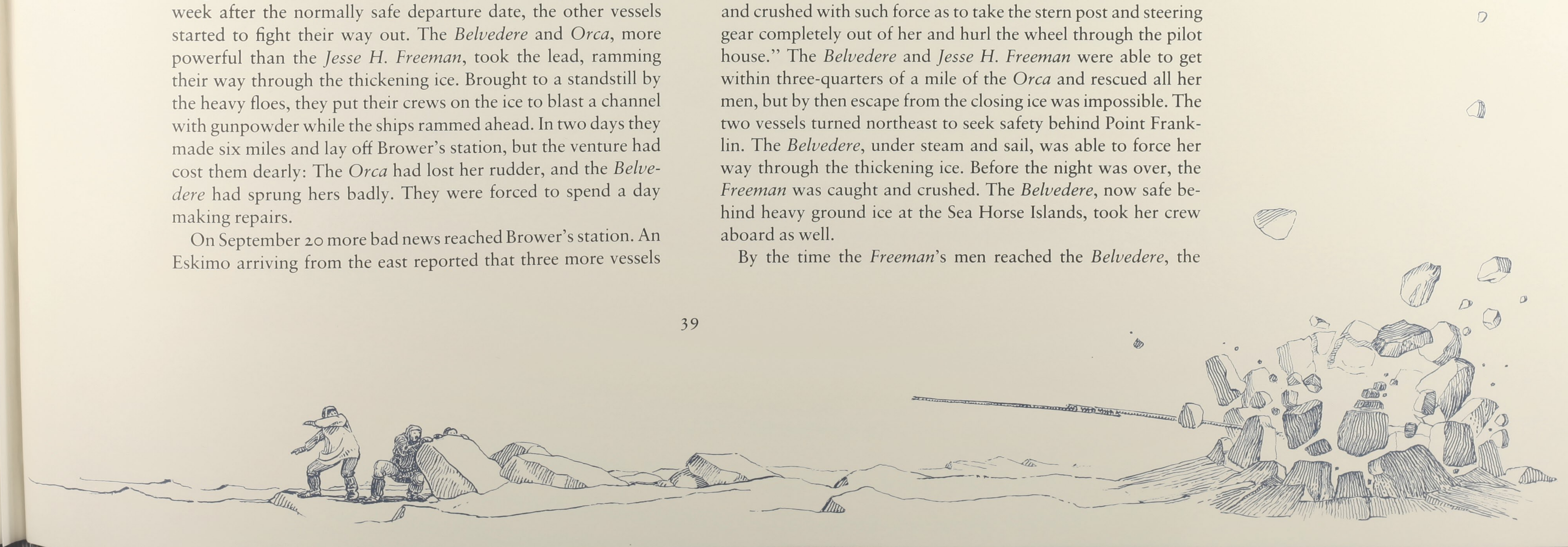
The *Rosario*, lacking auxiliary power, was forced to remain in the dangerous roadstead west of Point Barrow. She would never escape—she was crushed the following July. On September 17, a week after the normally safe departure date, the other vessels started to fight their way out. The *Belvedere* and *Orca*, more powerful than the *Jesse H. Freeman*, took the lead, ramming their way through the thickening ice. Brought to a standstill by the heavy floes, they put their crews on the ice to blast a channel with gunpowder while the ships rammed ahead. In two days they made six miles and lay off Brower's station, but the venture had cost them dearly: The *Orca* had lost her rudder, and the *Belvedere* had sprung hers badly. They were forced to spend a day making repairs.

On September 20 more bad news reached Brower's station. An Eskimo arriving from the east reported that three more vessels were trapped by the ice along the north coast. The steam bark *Fearless* and steam barkentine *Newport* were seventy miles away at Pitt Point, and the supply schooner *Jeanie* was thirty miles farther east at Cape Halkett. Of the vessels at Herschel Island, the bark *Wanderer* was the last to leave. She had been stopped by ice and had returned to winter at the Island anchorage. All four vessels were to survive, probably because their late departure from Herschel saved them from reaching the menacing waters west of Point Barrow.

Despite the increasing danger and necessity for speed, when Captain Martin Van Buren Millard of the *Belvedere* heard of the ships trapped east of the Point, he paused long enough to unload supplies of flour, molasses, coffee, and beans for them—a gesture displaying not only the generosity of northern people but also Millard's belief that his release from the ice was imminent.

As soon as the supplies were unloaded, the *Belvedere*, *Orca*, and *Jesse H. Freeman* resumed their effort to escape, slowly cutting through the young ice. By the evening of September 21, they reached Peard Bay, close to open water, but before the night was out, their fate was sealed. A strong northwest wind sprang up at 2 A.M., catching all three in a totally exposed position as they worked their way toward Point Belcher and the open water beyond. The *Orca* was "caught between two immense ice floes and crushed with such force as to take the stern post and steering gear completely out of her and hurl the wheel through the pilot house." The *Belvedere* and *Jesse H. Freeman* were able to get within three-quarters of a mile of the *Orca* and rescued all her men, but by then escape from the closing ice was impossible. The two vessels turned northeast to seek safety behind Point Franklin. The *Belvedere*, under steam and sail, was able to force her way through the thickening ice. Before the night was over, the *Freeman* was caught and crushed. The *Belvedere*, now safe behind heavy ground ice at the Sea Horse Islands, took her crew aboard as well.

By the time the *Freeman*'s men reached the *Belvedere*, the



moving pack, driven by the freshening northwesterly, had met the young shore ice, piling and rafting it into pressure ridges and cutting off any hope of escape. The *Belvedere*'s crew and her 102 passengers could see open water only a few tantalizing miles away. But the odds that the ice would slack off so late in the season were slim indeed. Captain Millard took the only prudent course and continued on to the northeast, bringing the *Belvedere* around behind the Sea Horse Islands into the shallow waters of Peard Bay. It was the wise move. The northerly gale continued for two days, forcing the pack, grinding and shearing, harder on shore.

There was no time to lose. Provisions had to be secured and the *Belvedere* made ready to winter. Parties were sent to salvage supplies from the two trapped ships, both held afloat by the pressure of the ice. One group reached the *Orca*, but the *Freeman* could not be reached because of dangerously thin ice.

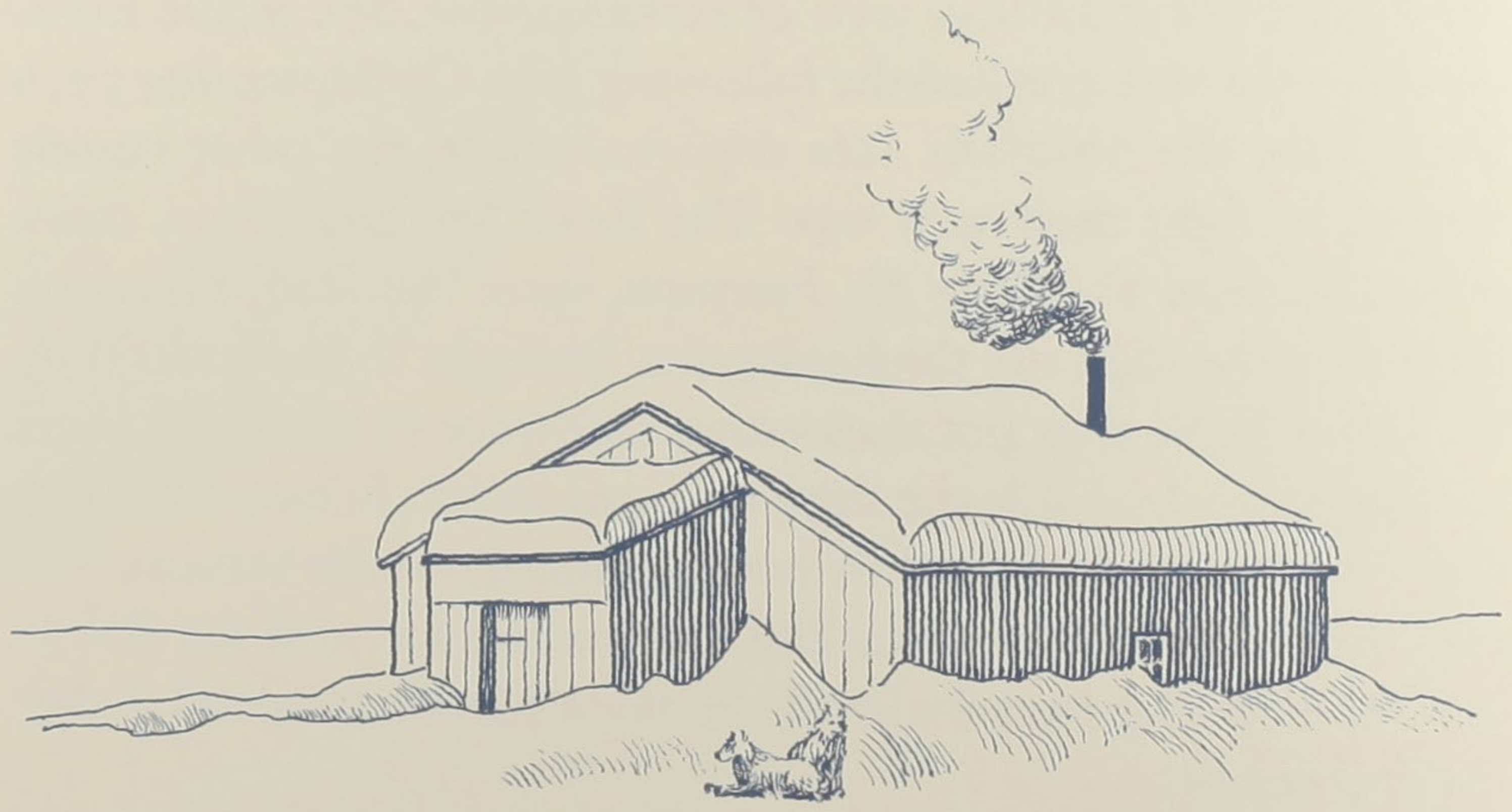
On the evening of September 24, all were hoping for another attempt to reach the *Freeman* when the sky lit up: the vessel was afire. A party of Eskimos had succeeded in reaching her, and in their haste while ransacking the cargo, had overturned a lamp. During the night, the *Freeman* burned to the water's edge. Jim Allen watched his ship burn:

> *All the yards were lit up with the fire, and once in a while a 100 gallon drum of coal oil would explode and the flames would shoot up. We could hear the cracking of the bombs that were to have been used for killing the whales. It sounded like a New Year celebration in Chinatown.*

Millard organized the men to prepare the *Belvedere* for winter. Her supplies and moveable equipment were taken ashore, and her bulkheads were torn out for materials to build a storage house for supplies on one of the islands, a precautionary measure in case of fire aboard the ship itself. Water was jettisoned, and the hull, now sufficiently lightened, was drawn through a channel cut in the young ice to a position close under the islands.

While the *Belvedere* was being secured, George Fred Tilton, the third mate, and Charles Walker, fourth mate of the *Orca*, were hard at work salvaging supplies from the *Orca*. After succeeding in getting most of her flour and potatoes and twenty cases of canned meat, they suddenly felt her hull shudder. As they jumped to the ice, the main and mizzen masts collapsed and the hull slowly rolled over and sank.

With the sinking of the *Orca*, the forecast of events for the next six months was essentially written. Most of the crew of the *Belvedere* would remain aboard the vessel with short rations for the winter. So would the crews of the ships trapped east of Point Barrow: the *Rosario*, *Newport*, *Fearless*, and *Jeanie*. But nearly one hundred men from the *Orca* and *Jesse H. Freeman* would have to make their way on foot to Point Barrow, sixty miles away, and there seek shelter with Brower and others.



Pt. Barrow Rescue Station

XI Decline

IN RETROSPECT we can see that the season of 1897 marked the beginning of the end. By that time, the industry's leader, the Pacific Steam Whaling Company, had already retrenched; its main investments in the Arctic fishery were five years past. After the purchase of the former coasting steamer *Newport* in 1892, the Company acquired no other ships for whaling. Josiah Knowles, the innovative manager, died in 1896, just as the industry's most profitable days had passed. The directors of the Company may have realized that the stocks of whales were low and that their profits would be more and more determined by luck. In 1896 the Company ended its shore whaling operations at Point Hope and Point Barrow, and in 1898 and 1899 withdrew its record-holding ships, the *Newport* and *Mary D. Hume*.

After the arrival of the *Bowhead*, itself a late comer in 1898, no large vessel or steamer entered the Arctic fishery. Although the price of baleen remained relatively high—never falling below $2.50 a pound between 1890 and 1897—the scarcity of whales increased the risks of a voyage to the point at which large amounts of venture capital were no longer being invested in this "greatest of marine lotteries, the bowhead whale fishery."

By the opening of the twentieth century, whalemen were well aware that accessible new whaling grounds were unlikely to be found in the western Arctic. To maintain profits and to minimize financial risk, they reduced costs by outfitting smaller, less expensive vessels. Although small vessels were by no means rare in the fishery before 1895, their limited capacity prevented them from bringing home large amounts of oil and baleen. Yet as catches declined, large size could be a disadvantage, too. Vessels designed to cart home great quantities of oil and baleen and carry six or seven whaleboats were costly to operate because of the size of the crew required to man them. The *Orca*, for instance, carried about forty-five men, whereas some of the small schooners, introduced near the turn of the century, needed only sixteen or so. Small whalers had their merits, and as their employment increased, they came to characterize the last brief phase of the western Arctic fishery.

Mary D. Hume

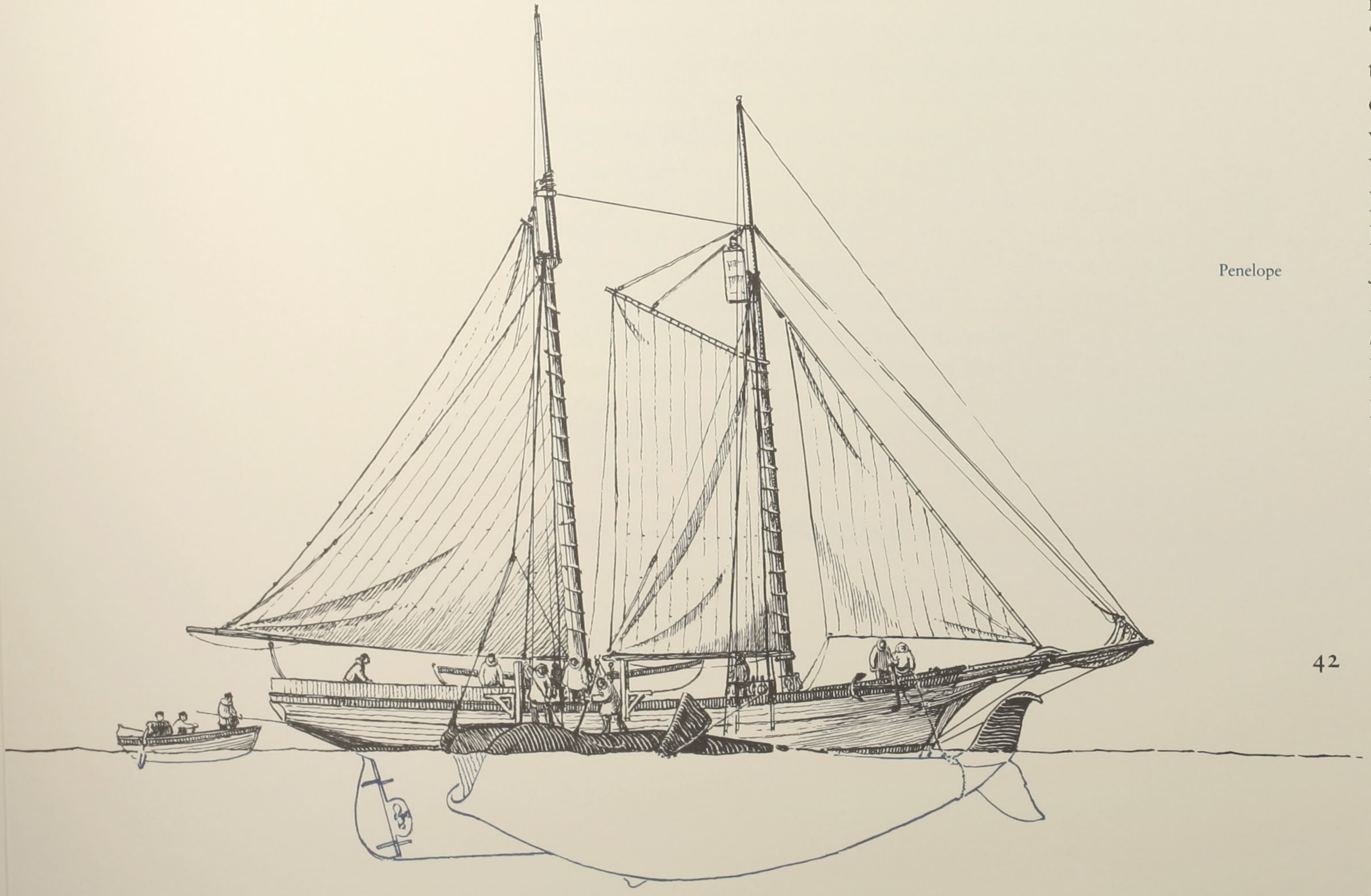
Equally important as an incentive to use small vessels was the development of the fur trade. From the first opening of the Arctic fishery in 1848, whalemen had traded with Eskimos and Chukchis for Arctic clothing, for furs, and for the baleen from the whales they killed. After 1875, with the price of baleen soaring, the whalers intensified their trading. In the 1890s most ships each season obtained about seven hundred pounds of bone taken in trade. Some took more than three thousand pounds. As baleen catches declined, furs offered a means of offsetting losses from unsuccessful voyages, and the whalemen, now equally proficient as traders, came to rely increasingly on this aspect of their operations in the north.

From 1900 onward, a number of small schooners entered the

Arctic for whaling and trading. With small crews, they could hold down their operating costs, trapping and trading during the winter. If they were fortunate enough to take a whale or two, then their profits were assured. In 1900 the little 43-ton schooner *Penelope* was fitted out for a two-year whaling voyage, followed by the schooners *Altair* in 1901, *Olga* in 1902, *Bonanza* in 1903, and others, including the *Rosie H.* in 1908.

In 1903, William Lewis, the original sponsor of the steam whalers, introduced the last major innovation in the Arctic whale fishery, the use of the internal-combustion engine. The 126-ton schooner *Monterey* was equipped with a small gasoline engine, over the protests of proponents of steam power who claimed—as the advocates of sailing had before them—that the engine would be too noisy and would scare the whales.

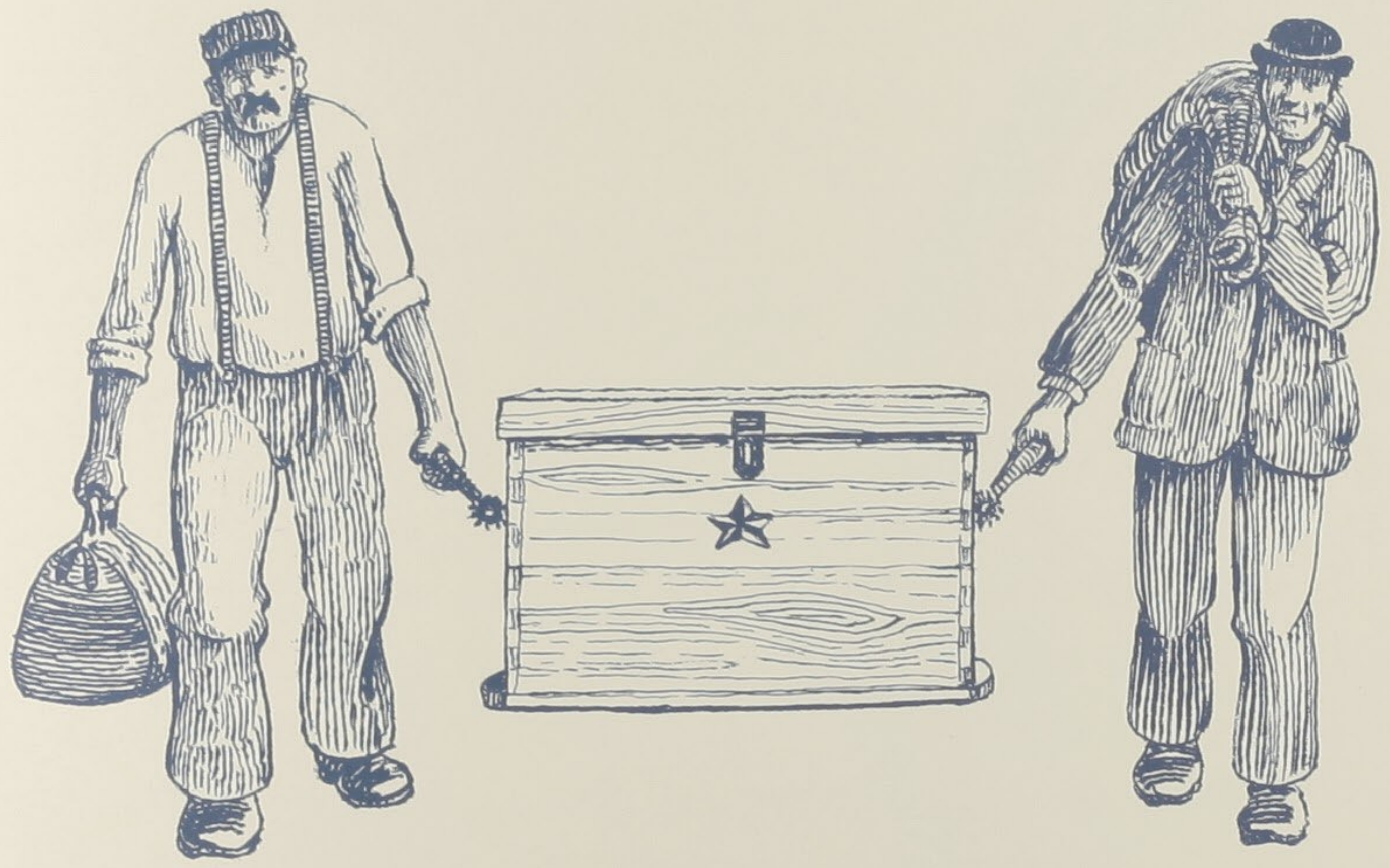
The voyage was moderately successful. "I found it easier this season to take the few whales we got than under the old methods," said the *Monterey*'s master, Captain Foley. "Because of her light draught and comparatively small size, [she] could work to better advantage, and the chugging of the engine was no drawback to the work." Sailing skippers told him, he said, that they could hear the steam whalers farther off than they could hear the *Monterey*. "I was able to get a whale that had sounded near an ice pack by simply running through the small openings and meeting him soon after he arose on the opposite side." His opinion, based on experience, was that "the gasoline engine has come to stay in the Arctic whaling business." Just as the first *Mary and Helen* proved the advantage of maneuverability which steam power enjoyed over sailing ships, the *Monterey* proved to possess an agility that the steamers lacked. Three other gasoline auxiliaries were quickly fitted out—the *Barbara Hernster*, *Charles Hanson*, and *Olga*—but their whaling returns were small, and whatever profits they made must have been based on the fur trade.



Penelope

The end of the industry occurred, for all intents and purposes, in 1907, when the price of baleen plummeted. Spring steel and "featherbone," an amalgam of goose quills, undercut baleen in the fashion market. Then fashion itself changed when Parisian couturiers changed a fifty-year trend and abandoned narrow waists, thereby ending the need for extensive boning in corsets. Within three years, the price of bone fell from $5.00 a pound to less than 50¢. In 1908 the leading Arctic whaling operators—the Pacific Steam Whaling Company, William Lewis and Sons, and John A. Cook—withdrew their remaining steam vessels: the *Beluga* and *Narwhal*, *Belvedere* and *William Baylies*, and *Bowhead*. In 1909 only the H. Liebes Company's *Herman* and Roth, Blum and Company's *Jeanette* and *Karluk* went north, and those primarily for the fur trade.

Curiously, the last convulsive lurch of the bowhead fishery occurred in New Bedford in 1908, where five years earlier the Old Dartmouth Historical Society had been founded to commemorate the history of the whaling industry. In that year, with the market for baleen collapsed, the remaining whaling companies organized the "whalebone trust" in an effort to force the price of baleen upward. This cartel, run by William Lewis's son, Edgar, received all whalebone imported into the United States and stored it in New Bedford until sold. By doing so, Lewis was able to control the market, such as it was, but for only six years. His last sales were made in 1913 at $1.35 per pound, then he, too, closed his doors.



Epilogue

SOME WISH TO BELIEVE that one whaleship may still be sailing in the Arctic. In 1888 the bark *Young Phoenix* lay on short scope in the shallow water northeast of Point Barrow seeking what shelter she could from a particularly vicious southwest gale. As the gale increased Captain Martin Van Buren Millard realized that his position was increasingly exposed. He tried to take in the two anchors to run before the seas. The strain on the cables was enormous, and as the crew worked on the windlass, one chain parted. The other held, but its anchor dug in so deeply it could not be raised. With the remaining cable drum-tight, it held the bow of the bark down into the full force of the oncoming seas "until a huge wave lifted her and dashed her down with a terrible shock. The anchor refused to let go, and she was again and again dashed on the bottom." Finally the anchor broke loose and Captain Millard tried to beach the ship, now mortally wounded with her rudder sprung and seams open. As she "floundered about among the breakers," she collided with the bark *Triton*, and Captain Millard gave up trying to reach shore. He headed her off before the wind. At 4 A.M. the *Young Phoenix* was thirty miles east of Point Barrow where her crew abandoned the vessel. They were picked up by the steam bark *Beluga*.

The *Young Phoenix* was seen in the pack, briefly, at the end of the summer two hundred miles east of Point Barrow. She was not seen again that season, but she returned to Point Barrow in 1889. The following report appeared in a New London newspaper.

> *One day in the early part of last May a man named Leavitt, who had charge of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company's station at Cape Smith, nine miles to the southwest of Point Barrow, was astounded to see a ship standing toward the shore about a mile in the offing, hemmed in by towering icebergs. Leavitt had spent the winter in the ice, and the appearance of a ship there at such an unusual time of the year nearly scared him out of his wits. Visions of that fabled ship, the Flying Dutchman, darted across his mind, but finally he recovered himself and walked down toward the beach. As he did so the fabric drew nearer to the land. He says it made a charming picture to his famished eyes, appearing as if formed of frosted glass.*
>
> *The mass continued to approach him, and he finally made out the complete outlines of . . . the Young Phoenix, a vessel with*

which he was familiar. She lay cradled immovably, with her deck just above the level of the icy valley where she reclined. Her three masts towered aloft with still perfect rake, and shrouds, backstays, braces and stays, covered with ice coatings in fantastic shapes, brought out in the sunlight in bold and beautiful relief against the blue mountains of ice behind.

The silent ship lay stern to the sea, about fifty yards from it, and slightly heeled to port. The prismatic effects of the spectral scene were heightened by heavy burdens of snow which cumbered the decks, the hawser, and the sails of the vessel. Two of the sails were shaking their stiffened tatters idly in the breeze, while the rest had the snug man o'war furl of a year before, and were frozen tightly to the yards. The vessel looked literally a ship of ice, for all the world like the toy ship enshrouded in crystals by the glass blower's art.

Plucking up his courage Leavitt finally went out to the ice pack and boarded the ship. He found everything intact upon the decks as it had been left. Not even the polar bear or the Arctic fox had paid her a visit, and the ropes were coiled on the belaying pins as the crew had placed them. There were no traces of the boats, which had evidently been torn from the ship's davits by the ice; but the great quilt of snow which enshrouded the Young Phoenix from stem to stern revealed the figuration of the hatches and paraphernalia, which showed that she had at no time since desertion been rolling in seas heavy enough to disturb any of her fittings. It is supposed, in fact, that she was picked up free from the water by the same ice pack which crushed her.

Leavitt went down into the ship's cabin and found several articles which he dragged over the fields of ice to his boat and conveyed to the shore. He would have continued stripping the vessel, but the ice floe containing her drifted off shore the following day. It remained in sight several days afterward, and then vanished to the northward.

Various theories are advanced as to the probable course the Young Phoenix will now take, and as to how long it will be before she is seen again. It is very likely, old Arctic whalemen say, that the island of ice now surrounding her will be built up by the addition of floating masses, and in time she may become a fixture somewhere around the north pole, dry-docked in the ice, for it is said that in those remote fields the ice may possess an age of hundreds of years, and may be continually accumulating in one quarter while breaking off and dissipating in another.

The whaler Young Phoenix a derelict, 1889

WILLIAM GILKERSON

Appendix With Commentary by the Artist

THE PLATES

All color plates have been reproduced from the original aquarelle, or transparent watercolor wash drawings, the dimensions of which are listed below.

I *The bark* Superior *enters Bering Strait, July 23, 1848* (12¾″ x 18½″)

Superior is depicted ghosting past the fleet of Eskimo umiaks which she encountered just south of the Diomede Islands, at center. East Cape, Siberia, is seen at the far left. The Eskimos examine the ship, unable to make up their minds as to whether or not she can be captured. As they hesitate, a slight breeze has begun to fill her sails. She wears everything she can spread, including studding sails, which were still carried on many whaling vessels in the mid-nineteenth century. The depiction of *Superior* is conjectural, based on the lines of a Baltimore-built merchant vessel of 1832, which was *Superior*'s construction and use before she was purchased into the whaling service and converted.

The Eskimos constructed umiaks in various sizes. Those used for long trading voyages were 35′ to 40′ in length, as shown. They were constructed of walrus hides stitched together and stretched over a wooden framework. The Eskimos of that time still wore the tonsured hair style of earlier ages.

II *The bark* California *and boats—lancing a spent bowhead* (13¾″ x 18″)

California fished in the northwest Pacific for much of the later half of the nineteenth century, before being broken up in San Francisco in 1906. She was a near sister-ship to the *Charles W. Morgan*, but with distinctive features of her own—notably the unusually lengthy main-topgallant mast which shows in photos of her. She is seen here hove to, probably at the end of a season, off Herald Shoal.

The wounded whale is spouting blood and is so weakened that the coup de grace is being administered with a hand lance, not to waste an expensive bomb lance. The whale has run out the line in the more distant boat, and it has been bent onto that of the foreground boat, which now has the whale, a fact evidenced by the harpoon still attached to the darting gun in its bows.

III *The bark* Jireh Swift *pursued by the Confederate ship* Shenandoah (13¼″ x 19¾″)

During the preparation of this composition, no real clues turned up as to *Jireh Swift*'s appearance, so she was here conjectured as a standard, boxy New Bedford whaler (she was built in Dartmouth) of that era. As sometimes happens, contradictory evidence emerged after the picture was finished, in the form of a William Bradford drawing of her in the archives of the Kendall Whaling Museum. This drawing revealed significant differences. According to Bradford, she had very fine entry lines, a straight sheer, and radically raked masts, each of which (foremast included) was rigged with a spencer. Bradford also depicts her with ship rig, suggesting later conversion to bark, a standard practice. Although it was too late in this work's production schedule to correct the plate, it has been possible to add a small ink drawing showing *Jireh Swift* as suggested by Bradford's drawing, and the reader's attention is directed to this, appearing above the map cartouche on page viii. She is again correctly shown on page 11, although afire.

IV *Wrangel Island discovered by the bark* Nile, *August 14, 1867* (12″ x 15¾″)

Nothing could be discovered as to *Nile*'s appearance. She is here depicted as a four-boat whaler. Members of her crew are gathered forward observing the large land mass which they have found. The leadsman in the chains is preparing to cast. The profile of the island is taken from Captain Long's own sketch as it appeared on a hydrographic chart.

V *The barks* Eugenia *and* Julian *abandoned in the Disaster of 1871* (13″ x 18¼″)

Visual information on these two vessels is sketchy, provided only in a lithograph by Newell (after Benjamin Russell), published in 1872. The two vessels were abandoned close to one another, as shown, both part of the "northern fleet."

VI *The bark* Helen Mar *clearing Prince of Wales Shoal, October 29, 1879* (12½″ x 17½″)

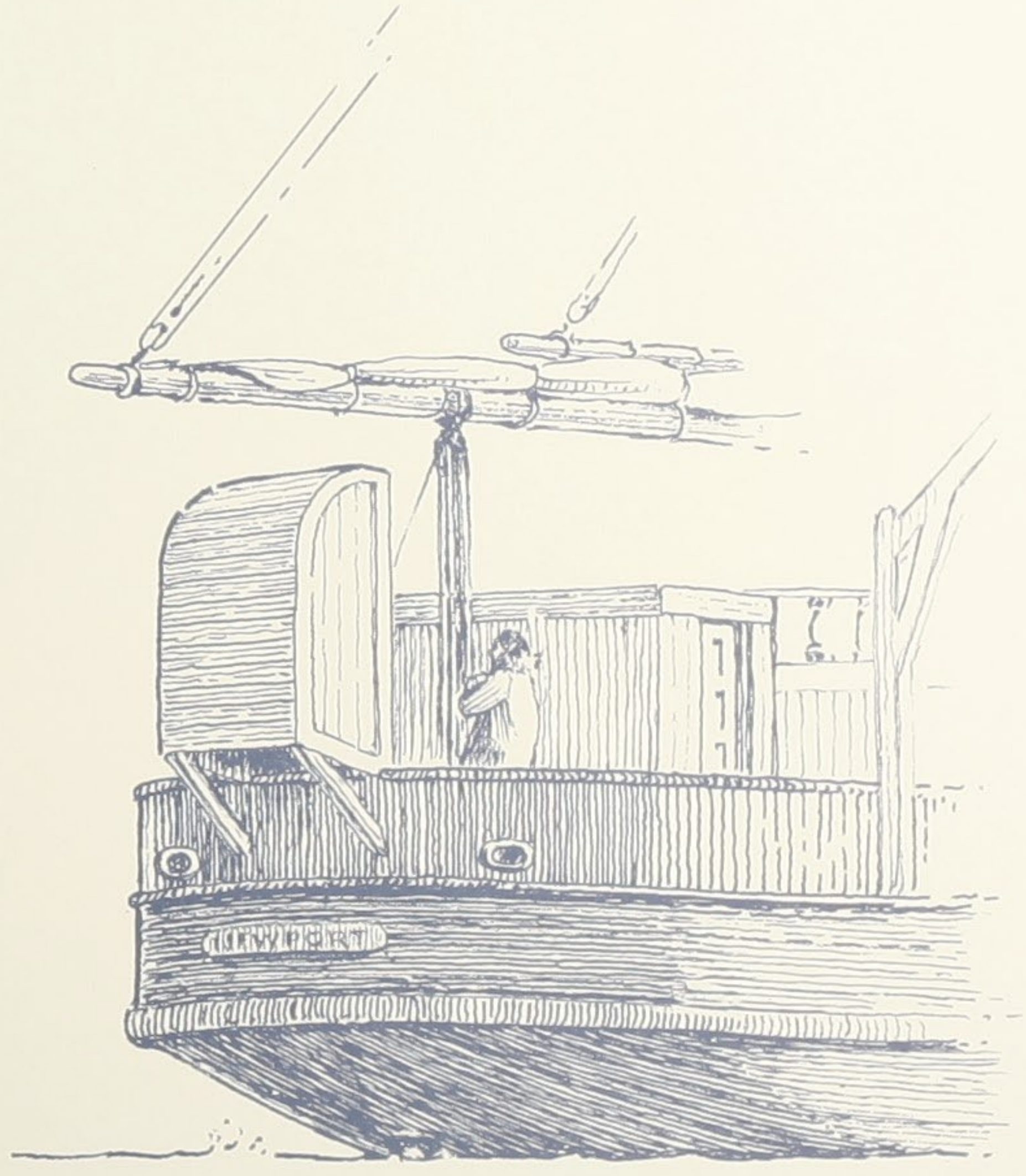
The conditions under which *Helen Mar* labored as she broke through Bering Strait to safety suggest she wore radically shortened sail, here postulated as lower topsails, spanker, and foretopstaysail. Her bows are still iced, but it has been melting and she has lost the ice apron which she wore earlier in her ordeal. One small original photograph of this vessel survives, clearly showing her double topsail rig along with certain hull details. *Helen Mar* was finally caught and crushed by the ice in October 1892 with the loss of 35 lives.

VII *Jim Vincent's boat lost in the ice, May 1885* (12¾″ x 17⅜″)

Vincent's whaleboat is here conjectured early in its wanderings, with sprit-rigged mainsail. It is ghosting in near-windless conditions, seeking a way through the ice to the Siberian coast.

VIII *The steam barkentine* Newport *among bowheads* (12¾″ x 20½″)

Whaleboats drift, waiting for their quarry to rise to the surface as *Newport* ghosts under sail, off the Baillie Islands. The use of her engine would alarm the whales. (The smoke is from her galley stove.) *Newport* was a distinctive vessel, perhaps the ugliest whaling ship of all to many eyes, but a functional and successful ship nevertheless. A distinctive feature was the privy suspended over her stern.



IX *Steam whalers wintering at Herschel Island, 1895* (12¾″ x 19¾″)

The composition of this picture repeats that of the previous painting, with *Newport* in nearly the same position, but banked with snow for insulation and locked in the ice of Pauline Cove. The other vessels pictured (from left to right) are *Balaena*, *Karluk*, and *Jeanette*. All of these vessels are documented in surviving photos. Lanterns glow from their entry ports, signifying a festive evening of some sort, with revellers making their way across the ice. There were many such evenings over the course of the long Arctic night. In the foreground, a whaleman walks with his Eskimo girlfriend. The scene is brightly illuminated by starlight and a full moon with the faceted lunar aura of light refracting through ice crystals. This is a phenomenon peculiar to the Arctic regions and is repeatedly described and illustrated by Nansen in his book, *Farthest North*.

X *The Fourth of July celebrated at Herschel Island, 1895* (12¾″ x 18″)

After the long winter, and the work of preparing the ships for the new summer whaling season, the crews here in Canada celebrated the American national holiday with games, music, and much revelry. The ships swing at anchor in the background, dressed out with flags. The view is from the south. The northwest corner of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company store house (which still stands, the second oldest building in the Yukon Territory) is seen at the right. At the left, the winner of the sack race crosses the finish line. At the right, a blanket toss is going on further down the beach, and a tossed Eskimo girl is seen above the heads of the crowd. Two central figures dance as musicians play. The instruments are typical of those found on shipboard at that time, as described below by Stuart Frank, Director of the Kendall Whaling Museum, and an authority on shipboard music. When he was consulted on the subject, he generously prepared the following short monograph for the artist's use. It is here printed not only as an example of the considerable research help received from various sources during the preparation of this book, but also as an interesting piece of original scholarship.

NOTES ON MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN THE WESTERN ARCTIC WHALING FLEET

Accordion

Of the several varieties of musical instruments found aboard Yankee whaleships in the late nineteenth century, perhaps the most common was the diatonic accordion. Invented in Austria and Italy in the 1820s, this is a "push-pull" apparatus on which each key produces two different notes, depending upon whether the bellows are expanded or compressed. Thus, like the harmonica, it is two-directional, without sharps or flats. They were not manufactured in any great quantities until after c. 1840, when they were mass-produced in France and (later) Germany. The chromatic "piano accordion," with piano keyboard and full range of sharps and flats, was not introduced until midcentury, and was never very popular among square-rig sailors.

The earliest form of diatonic accordion was the "flutophone" or "flutina." It had upwards of two dozen flat keys for the right hand and an air valve for the left. Though made primarily in France, they were used mostly in England, Scandinavia, and Germany, and were still being produced in the 1890s. They were customarily crafted of dark wood (rosewood, ebony, walnut) and tended to be highly decorated.

From this evolved the so-called German accordion, still in use in Central European and Cajun folk music, and Italian variants too numerous to name. Less elaborately crafted than the flutina, the German accordian features buttons rather than flat keys, typically has two "spoons" for left-hand chording, and sometimes has double or triple reeds for loud *oom-pah* playing, with stops (as in a parlor organ), so volume and tone are adjustable. The whole is usually brightly painted, with garish papers on the bellows.

The most popular seafaring accordion was the "Viennese" type, also called "German," manufactured in Germany during the latter part of the nineteenth century and familiar today as a product of the Hohner company. The most prolific version has 21 right-hand buttons arranged in two rows, and 4, 6, 8, or 12 left-hand chord buttons; but there are many variants. It was almost always made of wood, frequently with counterfeit graining, and was seldom costly. Very common among sailors, it was this instrument which became the traditional accordion of Scandinavia and Central Europe, and, with modifications in the arrangement of notes and keys, was adapted for Irish and Polish folk dancing. (One is pictured in Plate X.)

Concertina

Invented and improved by British physicist Charles Wheatstone from his patent of 1829, the familiar hexagonal concertina achieved mature form in the 1840s. Wheatstone's chromatic "English" concertina was a favorite with parlor musicians in England and Russia. It was never used much at sea; nor were the "Duet"-system concertinas, which were developed in England primarily as dance hall and concert instruments and were used in most Salvation Army bands.

The concertina popular among deepwater sailors (though less so than popular myth and songbook illustrations would lead one to believe) was the "Anglo" or "Anglo-German" variety, a two-directional, diatonic derivative of the diatonic accordion. Its origins are disputed. Some claim that it was developed in Germany prior to 1860, while others insist that it is the later invention of Charles Jeffries in London. Most likely, it was originally a simple, 20-key German innovation, later redesigned along more sophisticated lines by Jeffries and others in England.

The concertina has no chord buttons, but plays only single notes (this is its principal distinction from the various types of accordion). The 20-key "Anglo" has 10 buttons for each hand, arranged in horizontal rows of 5 each, and is supported by hand-straps (rather than shoulder-straps, or held on the knee). It was produced in Germany and widely distributed to British music dealers and ship chandlers (who often stamped their names into the wooden end-pieces), from whom seamen obtained them cheaply and circulated them abroad. Often German works were installed in (better) English cabinets. Most were made of maple and mahogany, with pierced-work decoration and colorful papers affixed to leather bellows.

A higher-quality instrument with a larger number of keys was crafted in London, often with baroque pierced-metalwork end-plates and tooled leather bellows. The versatility of this London-made Anglo concertina has made it second only to the fiddle in the west of Ireland and among the Irish in Liverpool, from whence perhaps it found its way to sea. In any case, it is this version of the concertina that was most often photographed in the hands of American sailors and Arctic whalemen in the nineteenth century (and appears in Plate X).

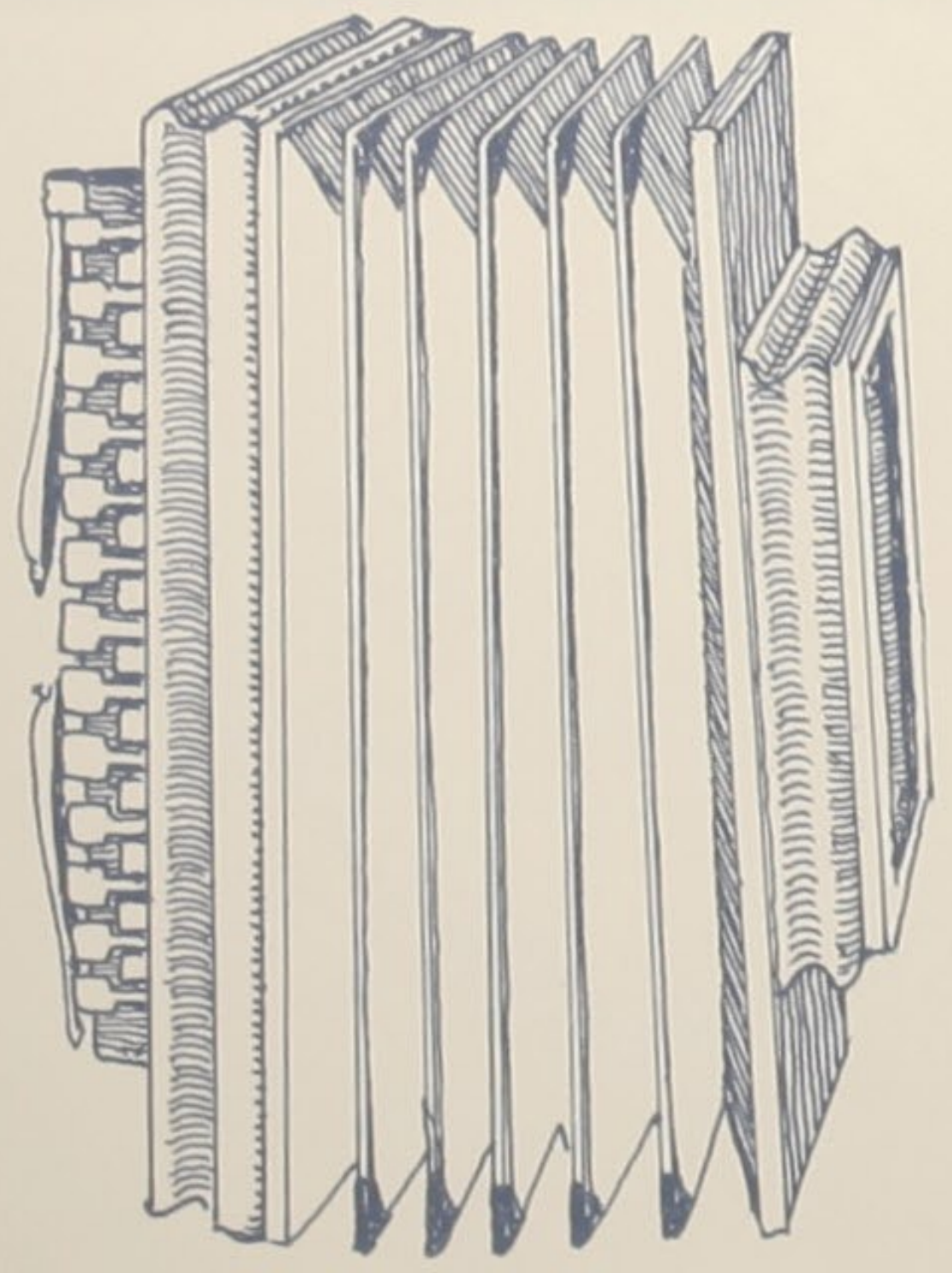
Other Instruments

For hundreds of years the fiddle (which differs in playing style but is otherwise identical with the violin) has been the principal folk instrument of virtually every nation in Europe, and has been a fixture on shipboard since the late Renaissance. Likewise, the flute and family of flute-related woodwinds (including fifes, tin whistles, and sundry folk variants) have always been desirable for their versatility, portability, and long association with traditional music. These and the ubiquitous harmonica (invented in the 1820s and popularized in the 1850s) were often stocked by ship chandlers and outfitters.

The ocarina, or "sweet potato," is a ceramic flute that emerged during Garibaldi's unification campaign in Italy; the guitar was common among Hispanic Cape Horn sailors, if not particularly among whalemen; banjos were not unknown at sea, especially among black seamen; bagpipes are known to have been in the dunnage of Celtic and Polish mariners (and to have been received with varying degrees of tolerance among other members of the crew); and "foo-foo" instruments of shipboard manufacture, including cigar-box fiddles, biscuit-tin banjos, and such full percussion sections as the galley of any whaleship could easily provide, were extremely common. It is also worth noting that in his one-act play about the Western Arctic whale fishery, *Ile* (1917), Eugene O'Neill awards the captain's wife a full-scale parlor organ, with which to while away the hours in the aftercabin amidst the relentless ice of the Alaska coast.

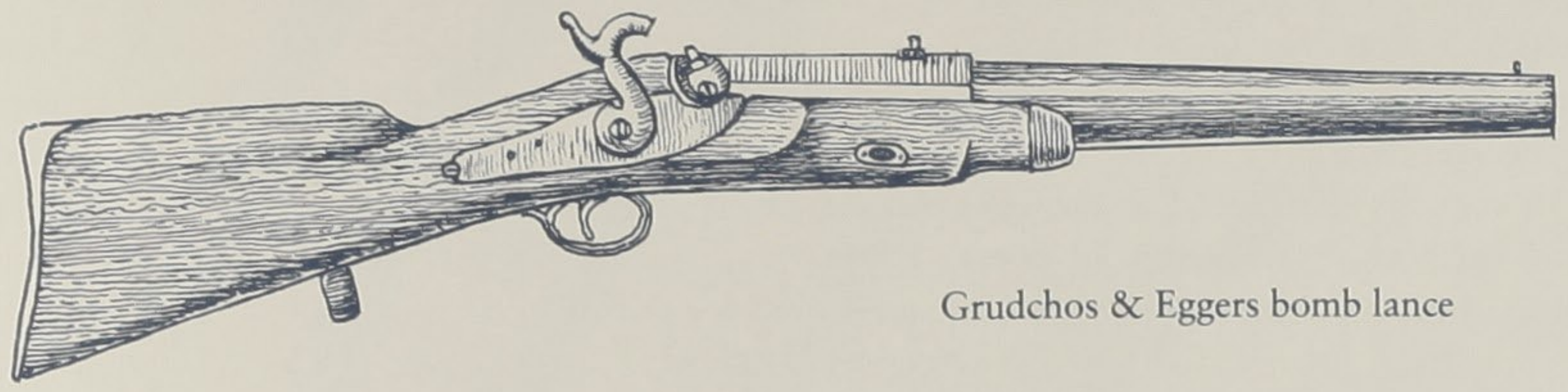
—Stuart M. Frank

Flutina



XI *The survivors of* Navarch *in Brower's party rescued, August 22, 1897* (11" x 20")
Of the 32 men who accompanied Charles Brower after *Navarch* was abandoned, 16 survived, here depicted about to be rescued by *Thrasher*. Eight of the party were unconscious at the time of the rescue.

XII *Whaler* Young Phoenix, *a derelict, 1889* (12¾" x 18¼")
This derelict was sighted a number of times as she drifted aimlessly in the ice, and it was noted by witnesses that her flag continued to fly upside down, as it had been left when the ship was abandoned. This picture repeats the composition used in Plate I.


Grudchos & Eggers bomb lance

THE DRAWINGS

All line drawings throughout are executed with brush and ink.

Page iii. (Title page monument): The publisher's logo surrounded by a walrus, a polar bear, a Yankee whaleman holding a Pierce and Cunningham darting gun with harpoon, and an Eskimo wearing the labrette and holding a stone-headed spear.

Page iv. Chilly whaleman in parka.

Page vii. A Pierce and Kilburn whaleboat with standing lug rig.

Page viii. The vessel decorating the map cartouche is *Jireh Swift*, after a drawing by William Bradford. (See appendix notes on Plate III.)

Page 2. Whaleman firing a bomb lance missile at extreme range at a bowhead, which is running with the line from another boat.

Page 5. Captain Thomas Roys. The drawing is after an old photo. He is here depicted with his Blunt and Syms ring-trigger pepperbox revolver.

Page 7. A harpooner poised with an Eben Pierce darting gun. The drawing was made from an example of an original implement (marked "11") loaned by Dr. Bryan McSweeny, and still fitted with its original lines, as shown.

Page 8. A C. C. Brand bomb lance, c. 1850, with missile.

Page 9. The Confederate raider *Shenandoah* approaches the cluster of whaleships surrounding the crippled *Brunswick*.

Page 11. The bark *Jireh Swift* burning.

Page 12. A conjectural view of Ebenezer Nye's boats from *Milo* sailing for Cape Bering. They are here postulated with lug mainsails, perhaps the most standard of all the Arctic whaleboat rigs, as there was no jib to interfere with the harpooner's movements.

Page 13. Penniman's cannon. The artist has beheld the phenomenon of an improperly restrained muzzle-loading cannon kicking itself into a complete somersault during firing, and landing on its back.

Page 14. Thomas Young fortified with liquor and a Brand bomb lance gun.

Page 17. View of a whaler's fore crosstrees, with frame-and-canvas weather station at the topgallant mast doubling, and the more exposed crow's nest hoops at the royal crosstrees above. The foretopgallant yard is unrigged, a standard practice in the Arctic fleet.

Page 19. A bird's eye view of a whaling bark pushing through broken ice.

Page 20. Map cartouche with dismasted whaleship.

Pages 22 and 23. The bark *Lagoda* taking on survivors in a choppy sea and a stiff breeze south of Blossom Shoals. Her port anchor chain has parted and, presumably, she has been forced to get up sail and heave to on the starboard tack under double reefed topsails, spanker, and jib. A boat with survivors is alongside, and three others are approaching. The one at the far left still has sail up, and is in the trough. The middle boat is getting down her mast, and the nearest boat is under oars, so as not to approach before the entry port is clear.

Lagoda, which remained afloat until she was condemned at Yokohama in 1890, is pictured here as she was reconstructed from two surviving photographs. The photos show some distinctive features which were not incorporated in the famous large model, supposedly of *Lagoda*, from Channing's plans in the New Bedford Whaling Museum. Most notably, these are different mast positions, an extraordinarily long beakhead extending more than half the exposed length of the bowsprit, and abnormally wide tops; there are also other, less conspicuous, variations.

Page 25. The bark *Helen Mar* with her ice apron, pushing through broken pack ice.

Page 27. A vignette of James B. Vincent, abstracted from a photograph taken on board the revenue cutter *Bear* shortly after his rescue.

Page 28. Vincent's message on a scrap of wood, obverse view, from the relic in the collection of the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

Page 29. Top to bottom: The first *Mary and Helen*; *Thrasher* hove to while getting aboard headbone; and *Orca*.

Page 31. Stoking the bull room stove and melting chunks of freshwater ice.

Page 33. Baseball below zero at Herschel Island.

Page 35. The steam whaler *Navarch* abandoned, August 3, 1897.

Pages 36 and 37. With extra moccasins (filled with ship's bread) slung around his neck, Charles Brower leads the crew of *Navarch* in their trek across the ice. The first man has fallen. The oar is being carried for use as an ice prod and as a signal flagpole, should a distant ship be sighted.

Page 41. *Mary D. Hume*, as she is thought to have appeared in 1899. Her curious rig is probably best described technically as that of a topsail schooner, although she was a brigantine or "brig" to the whalemen. At 98.2 feet on deck, and 240 tons, she was one of the largest of the Arctic steam whaling schooners.

Page 42. The *Penelope* preparing to cut the headbone from a bowhead whale alongside. At 43 tons and only 72 feet in length, *Penelope* was a tiny vessel for her work. There is an interesting footnote to her history. She was originally built as a yacht, then used to poach fur seals, then used as a whaler. Subsequently she was sold to Eskimos who used her to follow other whaling ships in hopes of picking up discarded whale carcasses. She carried inside lead ballast which her native owners gradually looted until she became unstable and rolled over in 1904. Salvaged, she again became a pleasure yacht until she was finally wrecked in 1907. During her whaling days, she was too small to lift a headbone aloft with cutting tackles, so the baleen was taken piecemeal by flensers standing on the carcass of the whale, and probably in a boat alongside as well. The boat with flensers is here seen approaching.

Page 43. A vignette of the last of the Arctic whalemen carrying their gear ashore in San Francisco.

THE ARTIST wishes to express his thanks to all those without whom this work would not have been possible in its present form, if at all. These include: Edward J. Lefkowicz, not only for publishing this volume, but for research assistance and other help; Paul A. Vardeman, Stuart Frank, Robert Farwell, Roger Hambidge, and Fred Schmidt for research assistance on the ships; Kerstin Gilkerson and Byron Jackson Gierhardt for studio assistance; all those who have modelled; Carl Larsson, Winslow Homer, Björn Landstrom, Peter Breugel the Elder, N. C. Wyeth, the Willems van de Velde, Siegfried Reinhardt, J. M. W. Turner, George C. Wales, and Graves Gladney, among others, for instruction. Special thanks for extraordinary art instruction to the Ven. Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, to whom I wish to dedicate my work here.

Lastly, thanks to John Bockstoce. It is insufficient to say this book could never have existed without him, and it is superfluous to enumerate his accomplishments as an energetic Arctic hand and a vivacious student of this history. They are evident. However, his ability to communicate his perceptions to this illustrator have given the making of the artwork a freedom seldom experienced.

That is, it was possible to shape all of the pictures here without having to constantly interrupt the spontaneity of the work to look up obscure (but important) details, like the construction of an Eskimo bow, or the appearance of Eskimo hair styles, c. 1850. I was able to construct my own bow and make my own hairdo and get on with the whole composition, knowing that John would correct me as soon as he examined the finished pencil drawing. From his remarks, these and all other drawings were easily corrected, sometimes recorrected, and finally put into the concrete of ink or paint. By this process, and with the mountains of research material loaned (including his own parka and moccasins for studio wear), an uninterrupted work flow was possible.

Further, John has allowed me to see through his eyes. Therefore, I have been able to sail my little ships into places I have not gone, understanding something of the sailors who staged the last act of the old Yankee whale fishery while playing the death rattle of an industry (and an era) against the chillest and most foreboding backdrop that creation could devise.

W.G.

AMERICAN WHALERS
in the
WESTERN ARCTIC
Was designed by William Gilkerson.
It was printed in offset lithography from Sabon type
Set by The Stinehour Press, Lunenburg, Vermont,
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By The Meriden Gravure Company, Meriden, Connecticut,
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By the Harcourt Bindery, Boston, Massachusetts.
It was printed in an edition of 400 copies,
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This is number III

Wm Gilk

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